

The cover art features a stylized sun with rays emanating from behind a semi-circular horizon. A silhouette of a tree stands on the horizon line. Below the horizon is a stylized map of the United States. The entire scene is set against a light blue background with a radial pattern of lines.

LEARNiNg Landscapes

*Inclusive Education: Socially
Just Perspectives and Practices*

Spring 2014 Vol. 7 No. 2

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Statement of Purpose



LEARNing Landscapes™ is an open access, peer-reviewed, online education journal supported by LEARN (Leading English Education and Resource Network). Published in the autumn and spring of each year, it attempts to make links between theory and practice and is built upon the principles of partnership, collaboration, inclusion, and attention to multiple perspectives and voices. The material in each publication attempts to share and showcase leading educational ideas, research, and practices in Quebec, and beyond, by welcoming articles, interviews, visual representations, arts-informed work, and multimedia texts to inspire teachers, administrators, and other educators to reflect upon and develop innovative possibilities within their own practices.

Review Board (Vol. 7 No. 2)

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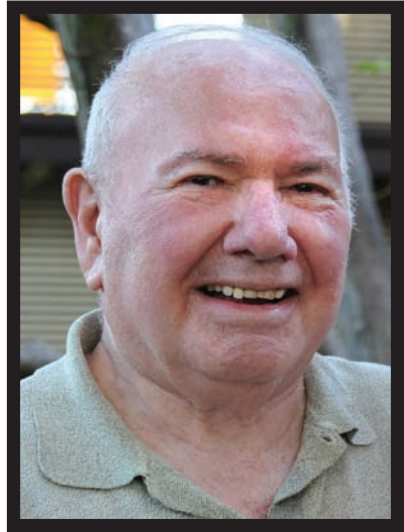
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Dedication

This issue of LEARNING Landscapes, *Inclusive Education: Socially Just Perspectives and Practices*, is dedicated to **Dr. Elliot Eisner** (March 10, 1933 - January 10, 2014), Professor Emeritus, artist, educator, and world-renowned scholar from Stanford University, who changed the face of qualitative research. Elliot's work, in particular the *Enlightened Eye*, gave artists and researchers worldwide the theoretical rationale and permission to use the arts as avenues for eliciting stories, analyzing data, and representing findings in research.



As President of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) in 1992-93, Elliot was able to foster and develop the thinking in this awakening field of arts-based research. He did this by creating safe spaces for this kind of work at the AERA Annual Meeting, in publications, and by continuing to travel widely to speak passionately and persuasively about the importance of the arts for: providing different forms of understanding, reaching wider audiences, and changing the nature of education. In the mid-1990s, Elliot, along with his former PhD student, Tom Barone, initiated the first AERA arts-based institute which at that time and subsequently, has attracted researchers from around the globe and began the arts-based Special Interest Group (SIG) at AERA that still flourishes today. In 1999, Elliot agreed to come to Montreal to launch the first *Distinguished Educator Seminar Series* at McGill where he enthralled the audience with his message and enthusiasm. This series is now in its 15th year. Then in 2008, we were honoured when Elliot accepted the invitation to write a commentary for the third issue of LEARNING Landscapes entitled, *Education and the Arts: Blurring Boundaries and Creating Spaces*. He validated the work we were doing, for which we are immensely grateful, and as usual provided a poignant message for what "...education can learn from the arts." Elliot has been heard to say that certain people live poetically. He was one such person. His kindness, artistry, generosity of spirit, and brilliance have touched many and will continue to do so for many years to come.

Editorial

All educators know that there is much to be learned about teaching from learners. While reading through the excellent submissions for this issue on inclusion, two poignant memories of my own classroom teaching came to mind. The first was of Carla, a six year-old who was a year young for grade two. She was quiet, conscientious, academically adept, and frequently alone. Her conversations with me were deep. She wondered about the meaning of God, for example. And when she completed the novel *Oliver Twist*, she marvelled at how the title character could have survived. She taught me that by going to play with her at her house after school, by casting her as the fortune teller for the class carnival where she used her crystal ball to enthral her classmates, and by encouraging her to make “Dutch skaters soup” on a small burner in the corner of the room, she was able to make inroads into a circle of friends.

The second was Kenny, about whom I have written before (Butler-Kisber, 1997). He was nine and in grade two; the other students were six and seven years old. Kenny was outgoing, friendly, and cooperative, but had serious literacy and numeracy difficulties that challenged me as a beginning teacher. Luckily, I stumbled upon his artistic ability. He used his drawing to build a sight-word vocabulary, he explored with a small group of boys the travel of Vikings, and became the lead on the construction of a six-foot Viking ship equipped with sails, shields, and swords. His confidence soared when, as the illustrator for a co-authored picture book entitled, *Clifford Falls in Love*, he was able to read it aloud to his peers from cover to cover, including when Clifford got “infatuated.”

I have carried these and many other lessons with me throughout my career. I have learned from students that to achieve social justice, inclusion is a daily, pedagogical responsibility of the teacher, and that the labels and other deficit notions about students that educators use have huge consequences for students and fly in the face of celebrating diversity, and ensuring access and inclusion for all.

Adams, Bell, and Griffin (2007) argue that

... social justice is both a process and a goal. The goal of social justice is full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. Social justice includes a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure... The process for attaining the goal of social justice ... should also be democratic and participatory, inclusive and affirming of human agency and human capacity for working collaboratively to create change. (pp. 1–2)

Invited Commentaries

In a compelling commentary, **Frederic Fovet**, Director of the Office for Student Disabilities at McGill University, discusses how even though inclusion is recognized as a right enshrined in the law, it is seldom implemented in everyday practices. He laments the medical, remedial model that is based on referring students to experts which then segregates them into a parallel educational system. He suggests teaching should be based on the Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which is a concept that,

... was borrowed from the world of architecture and product design ... if you design a building ... in a way that is accessible to all from the outset, it will end up being more elegant, more efficient, and more useful while being less expensive than if you have to go back in and add features after the fact. (Bacon, 2014, p. 23)

The UDL approach embraces three basic pedagogical principles, those being to provide: 1) multiple means of representation; 2) multiple means of action and expression; 3) and multiple means of engagement (Rose & Meyer, 2002). Fovet argues that it is only when access and inclusion are linked that classrooms can become truly inclusionary.

Karen Hulme, a retired teacher who worked for 42 years at the Mackay Centre in Montreal, discusses in our interview the rewards she had in working with physically challenged students. She shares how she knew from a very young age that this was the work for her, and why she never looked back. She traces the history of Mackay Centre and how she and a dedicated staff there worked, whenever possible, to integrate these students into the “regular” school system, and the successes they enjoyed when they initiated “reverse integration,” which brought students from the school system into Mackay Centre. Karen underscored that when a Mackay student left there to be integrated into another school, the success of the transition depended greatly upon having a friend, and that she spent many hours helping to cultivate friendships for her students in these new settings. Here is a teacher that truly made a difference.

The final commentary is a poignant discussion with 12-year-old **Wren Kauffman** and his mother. Wren is a transgender boy from Edmonton who, born physically as a girl, always felt that he was a boy, and transitioned at age nine. This conversation highlights the hurdles, large and small, that Wren and his family encountered during this journey, and also underscores with examples how individual people—family members, friends, teachers, and other professionals—were invaluable in helping to make this inspiring story the success that it is. The courage and openness of this young man as he continues to advocate for LGBTQ issues are truly admirable. The world needs to hear his story.

As usual, the articles in this issue are presented in alphabetical order by author. In this editorial, I discuss them thematically.

Deficit Notions About Learners That Defy Inclusion

It is appropriate to frame the submissions in this issue with the article by **Gilham**, who is an assistant professor at St. Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia. He begins with a significant story of Danielle, and her struggles to gain full access to learning in her classroom in spite of an excellent inquiry curriculum approach and a team of very good teachers. In order to help Danielle, he shares how it became necessary to persuade the educators in this school to shift their thinking from the medical referral model mentioned above, to a more inclusive way of teaching. He follows this story with a history of education in Alberta, pointing out along the way the exclusionary practices that remain entangled within the current system of inclusion. What he relates here is probably quite similar to the history in many other provinces and beyond. Building on the work of Gadamer, he argues for using the principles of hermeneutics to help illuminate present knowledge and practices which are always a product of their historical past.

Identity Marginalization in Educational Contexts

Daniels describes how she had to unlearn mainstream discriminatory educational practices that she acquired as a student herself in order to help a young male Indigenous student in her classroom. She was able to call on the qualities of respect, love, and caring for others that were instilled in her by her grandparents during her childhood on the Reserves, and to concentrate on building relationships which is the cornerstone of good teaching practice. **Fiss** shares her personal experiences to illustrate the pain and discrimination that one can experience when dealing with binary identities. She advocates embracing both, rather than sacrificing one identity in favour of another. **Swanson** relates how in graduate school she was able to use narrative inquiry and reflection to reclaim her familial identity as a Métis, and to envision ways that she could give voice to students struggling with similar tensions. **McCullum Baldasaro, Maldonado, and Balthes**, as others (Bruner, 1986), believe in the power of story to awaken metaphorical understanding and critical reflection. They describe in some detail the “Blanket Exercise Kit” which they have used to initiate storytelling that moves participants in profound ways, and helps outsiders to understand Aboriginal experiences. **Arnett** posits that young adult immigrants, who are at an age when work becomes a necessity, have to deal with different language identities and the inherent tensions as they attempt to acquire English. They are penalized further by the costs

incurred in acquiring the necessary language competencies needed to become part of the work force. She suggests that local initiatives have potential, but that far more needs to be done.

Classroom Approaches for Access and Inclusion

Baurhoo and **Asghar** take the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach into the science classroom. They propose that UDL, which is based on neuroscience and cognitive considerations, helps to create inclusive classrooms by building self-confidence in the students, and reducing stigmatization and isolation. **Reeve** and **Sharkawy** are also interested in science. They describe the Knowledge-Building Communities (KBC) approach for teaching in science classrooms. Grounded in constructivism and based on the Funds of Knowledge theory (Moll, Ananti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992), KBC uses the students' knowledge and understanding as the starting place for learning, and places high value on the experiences that they bring to the classroom. They suggest that KBC not only makes science more accessible to all learners, but also helps students to envision a socially just and environmentally sustainable world. **Reisinger** suggests that teachers frequently resort to global behaviour-management strategies which are not sufficiently tailored to meet the far-ranging needs of the diverse nature of students in today's classrooms. She argues that a biopsychosocial approach is needed, one that examines biological, psychological, and social/environmental factors of each child. She shares a helpful example what a multimodal profile might look like for a particular student. **Hollands'** area of expertise is with Highly Sensitive Children (HSC). In her article she shares her own experiences with her son to help sensitize and inspire teachers to create caring and safe environments, which of course are needed by all children, but even more so in cases of those who are highly sensitive. **Gibbons** makes innovative and practical suggestions for an inclusive pedagogy for girls in physical education. She contends that more of this work is needed to keep girls engaged in physical education during the high school years. **Millard** recounts how a workshop approach that she used with grade four language arts students allowed one student in particular, who might otherwise have been relegated to a special class, to have meaningful experiences with literature. She emphasizes the need to move away from deficit notions about students, and to encourage them to be teachers of each other in an atmosphere of trust and encouragement.

Engaging Pre-Service Teachers in Inclusionary Practices

A number of contributions that we received suggest the importance of working extensively with pre-service teachers on issues of diversity, access, inclusion, and social justice. **Peebles** and **Mendaglio** describe a strategy they use with teacher candidates (TCs) called the Individual Direct Experience Approach (IDEA). It is arranged during their practica that these novice teachers follow and work with a student with particular needs within the classroom context. They are required to find the ways to scaffold the student and adjust their teaching to ensure that the student is included in all aspects of the classroom learning. **Cho** and **Tersigni** work extensively with TCs on strategies to ensure anti-oppression, that they then try out in their practica. These researchers analyzed student perceptions and concluded that fear, convenient excuses, and a preconceived notion of the neutrality of education were what created a resistance to an anti-oppression framework among some of the TCs. They suggest that ongoing work on teacher identities, collaboration with peers, and extensive discussions and workshops are necessary to sustain anti-oppression thinking and teaching when these candidates move into their own classrooms. **Kulnieks** and **Young** outline how they use an “eco-justice” pedagogy to identify ways of understanding inclusion both theoretically and in practice. They emphasize the need for TCs to be connected to the arts and natural world to understand social justice. They do this by implementing an arts-informed curriculum using poetry to broaden the TCs’ understanding of inclusive education, as well as through an alternative practicum called “the learning garden” that grounds these candidates in a sense of place. In what these authors call “environmental autobiography,” the TCs explore their intergenerational connections and connections to nature through their garden experience and poetic inquiry. The authors conclude that this experience helps TCs to link social justice and ecological sustainability with the development of an inclusive curriculum.

Changing the Landscape of Research to Honour Diverse Participants

Three of our submissions focused on the important topic of ensuring that research practices are inclusive and just. **Saleh**, **Menon**, and **Clandinin** share how they work alongside and with participants in ways that honour both their stories and those of research participants. Their ethics of being and doing research breeds trust and allows an openness to flourish in the context of the work. In turn, this allows multiple stories to emerge that challenge the stereotypes about both teachers and researchers and, in so doing, celebrates human diversity. **Corona**, **Hannum**, and **Davidson** discuss their research approach with adults who have intellectual challenges. They work on creating a relationship with the participants prior to the interviews, and then use strategies such as repeating participants’ contributions to help clarify the discussion.

Finally, they produce self-advocacy videos with the participants that are meaningful and empowering. They provide links to these within the article for reader follow-up. Last but not least, **Macia** and **Lalas** ground their research in the Funds of Knowledge theory mentioned earlier. Their study focused on the forms of capital that contribute to academic success in order to challenge prevailing deficit notions about students from Latino backgrounds. Their study shows how, by using multiple ways of gathering data such as journaling and photovoice, these researchers were able to elicit and value the knowledge and skills that these students develop in their homes and communities, tangibles such as dance, culinary skills, and computer literacy. This awareness brought renewed respect from teachers and underscored how important it is for them to really know their students in order to create inclusive learning contexts.

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Commentary

Navigating the Delicate Emerging Synchronicity Between Inclusion and Access

Frederic Fovet, McGill University

ABSTRACT

The author examines how the synchronicity between access and inclusion is emerging in both the K-12 and post-secondary fields. Previously, both agendas have too often been artificially distinguished, it is argued. The article examines the opportunities this creates for the hands-on implementation of inclusive practices in the class, and considers some of the repercussions this organic merge will have at policy level. The author also highlights how the progressive overlap between inclusion and access best practices—such as Universal Design for Learning—benefits the full spectrum of diverse learners.

Educators often complain of the sheer abundance of theoretical and practice models with which they have been bombarded over the decades; interactive teaching, differentiated teaching, collaborative learning, and heutagogy being but a few examples of the myriad trends currently competing for the teacher's attention and dedication (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007). There is a phenomenon of theoretical "exhaustion" and it is therefore only natural for educators to fail, or to be reluctant, to see natural associations and overlaps between approaches that share perhaps far more than their name indicates. A striking exception, in this current decade, is the way the inclusion and access agendas are finally coming together and blending into one common concern for both K-12 and post-secondary educators.

Until still recently both these discourses were perceived, and promoted, as very distinct. Indeed, inclusion has now been on the books for over a decade but is still conceived by many as “best practice,” and not necessarily as a principle that systematically delineates and structures everyday lesson planning, classroom intervention, or evaluation. In this sense, it is perceived as a central premise but one that is nonetheless often relinquished to second place after curriculum objectives, standardized testing imperatives, classroom management, and so forth (Tedesco, 2013). Equally, the access to learning discourse—and the legal and jurisprudential baggage it carries—is conceptually widely accepted in education. In practical terms, however, until recently the assumption was that this “access to learning” would happen after the fact, almost independently of curriculum development or classroom pedagogy, through the retrofitting efforts of “specialists.” This is particularly true of the post-secondary sector, where everyone accepts the legitimacy of the Human Rights grounding for access to learning, but few, until recently, really accepted it might have any impact on mainstream pedagogy or assessment (Gradel & Edson, 2010).

In practical terms, individual teachers, school administrations, school boards, and even jurisdictional policies do emphasize the need to achieve an inclusive classroom atmosphere, but it is striking, even over a decade into the unfolding of such policies, how tenuously these efforts are perceived as having any tangible links with the Human Rights dimension and the fundamental imperative to provide each student with access to learning (Beach, 2010). Experience and existing literature both evidence how the inclusive piece, while central to professional development, very much remains a stand-alone notion and objective. It is, in many ways, the “happy place” educators allude to and wish to achieve, but one that few have the means to attain (Kluth, Villa, & Thousand, 2002). One of the sad realizations of the last decade is certainly the extent to which the inclusion discourse has remained prominent, but simultaneously hermetical. The focus on the notion as a goal has surprisingly little natural osmosis impact on classroom concerns and practices (Tedesco, 2013). One cannot, in fact, create inclusion without redesigning the curriculum and evaluation methods; this is the only way that an inclusive environment can emerge organically (Kosanovich, 2012; Katz, 2013). Similarly, it is high time for educators to realize that inclusion is the product of systematic everyday pedagogical processes, not an afterthought left to Friday afternoons, the day when all other class objectives are met, or pedagogical days. It is not a luxury but a basic.

Similarly, inclusion is not someone else’s business; it is each teacher’s responsibility (Villa & Thousand, 2005). For too long now, educational systems have been morphed into vehicles of “referrals,” in a process that disempowers educators and segregates students (Bradley, Danielson, & Hallahan, 2002). There is a need to create ownership

over inclusion, amongst our educators, and to put an end to the notion that if it is to be achieved, it requires the assistance of specialists, or that it is the sole panacea of individuals outside the classroom. This has allowed this otherwise fairly straightforward notion to become mystified to the point of creating a feeling of disconnect amongst an entire generation of classroom professionals. Of course, if we are to dig deeper behind this “culture of referral,” it becomes quite plain that it is founded largely on the belief that inclusion requires expert, clinical knowledge of a wide array of impairments and diagnoses that have social or cognitive impacts on our learners. Educators have so internalized the medical model that it has become daunting for classroom practitioners to attempt inclusive approaches for fear that they are lacking essential skills. “Inclusion is not a place; it’s a state of mind” has been a popular motto conveyed recently by popular digital media that carries much wisdom. Adopting that state of mind, and creating an inclusive classroom climate, does not require expert knowledge; it requires a practical, layperson’s reflection on curriculum and delivery. It requires a systematic but not terribly complex individual analysis of the barriers that may be present in our classroom and a simple—but systematic—desire to eliminate them.

At the other end of the spectrum, the access discourse has also far too long been anchored in a remedial model. The focus has been on assistive technology, clinical diagnosis, expert knowledge, parallel service provision, welfare model funding, diagnostic categorization, gatekeeping, and a perpetuated culture of “help” (Houghton & Fovet, 2012). The disability movement itself has internalized the medical model and, while it advocates explicitly for a social model construction of disability, the very actors of this scene perpetuate practices, policies, and discourses that squarely place responsibility for access on specialists within a parallel system, not on the main actors of the classroom. This is equally true of the K-12 sector and of the post-secondary environment, even if it manifests itself in differing ways.

In secondary education, this internalization of the medical model has led to the coding of needs, the creation of a two-tier system with “experts” on access imposing assistive practices while not themselves having responsibility for their pedagogical integration, and to the maintaining of segregated provisions inside education systems that proclaim themselves all-inclusive. It is a global phenomenon that sadly marks the failure of much of the mainstreaming efforts of the last decade: in the UK, for example, Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) too often become the daily setting of instructions for many (Munn & Lloyd, 2005); most North American school boards meanwhile happily transfer funds, students, and responsibility to specialized non-profits instead of re-investing these funds towards the creation of effective inclusive settings inside state schools; finally, there are very few jurisdictions where the utter fear surrounding

the management of autism spectrum disorder has not led to the creation of services so specialized that they render the very premise of inclusion as paradoxical. Education systems have been so intent on identifying individual needs that they have created conditions within which it is literally impossible, at present, to achieve or maintain a climate of inclusion (Visser, Daniels, & Macnab, 2005).

In the post-secondary sector, inclusion has in fact hardly been tackled at all and while the legal imperative of access to learning has been paramount, the provisions to achieve this goal have ironically been entirely segregated. The presumption has been that the teaching body was not sufficiently aware, pedagogically skilled, dedicated, or willing to endeavour to tackle access to learning from the classroom angle. Until the relatively recent emergence of models such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL), there had literally been no attempts to address disability and access to learning from a perspective other than remedial (Gradel & Edson, 2010). Segregated retrofitting, taking place outside the class itself, has been the only lens in use. The internalization of the medical model and of its presumptions has been so widespread that even the disability service providers are often the first to show reticence and suspicion towards a social model approach (Barnes, 2012). There are no inclusive practices or policies in place, despite the fact that the post-secondary sector has by now globally acknowledged the extreme diversity of its student population.

Where does that leave us, in this relatively new millennium? The simple, but perhaps most revolutionary, realization having occurred recently in the field of education is the extent to which a synchronicity does in fact exist between the concepts of inclusion and access to learning, and that one cannot be achieved without the other. For the K-12 educator, this amounts to the progressive realization that access is not some ethereal notion that is much discussed in professional development but remains unachievable in the midst of everyday classroom challenges. It is the growing understanding that inclusion is not achieved or magically created by specialists with a developed understanding of impairments and diagnoses. It, in fact, emerges from daily practices that are primarily grounded in plain reflective work on our own curriculum development, classroom practices, and evaluation method. A model such as UDL, for example, has made giant strides in helping educators understand that they themselves have ownership of access to learning and that analyzing the classroom, through a social model or ecological lens, requires little more than common sense (Gordon, Gravel, & Schifter, 2009). UDL does not focus on remedial action targeted at a specific need or impairment, but seeks instead to widen access through simple processes requiring little specialist or clinical knowledge. By encouraging teachers to offer multiple means of representation, expression, and engagement, the model reduces dramatically the

reliance on highly specialized interventions and seeks rather to widen access in the class to the greatest number possible through the teacher's reflection on possible generic barriers (Rose & Gravel, 2010).

This reflection leads to an identification and analysis of possible barriers but requires no in-depth understanding of the multiple impairments present in our classrooms; what it does require is the desire and ability to hypothesize about what potential barriers to learning might be and a willingness to erode and remove these barriers before even getting to the blueprint of a lesson plan (Meo, 2012). Access and inclusion have merged as concerns, and now stand united as a goal (Rose & Gravel, 2010). Another revolutionary *prise de conscience*, in the midst of this demystifying process, is that many of the hands-on solutions which appear as congenial and immediately helpful, when analyzing barriers to access to learning, quickly show pedagogical potential for the inclusion of all learners, not just students with impairments, but also for students from non-traditional backgrounds, other cultures and languages, and so forth (Ralabate, 2011). The three principles of UDL, as well as the core guidelines of differentiated or interactive teaching, suddenly become not only tools that guarantee access to learning for students with cognitive and emotional impairment, but also significantly improve the learning experience of all our learners (Tegmark-Chita, Gravel, Serpa, Domingos, & Rose, 2012).

In the post-secondary sector the opposite transition is occurring. The discourse has focused on the legal imperative of access to learning for over two decades; institutions had created giant parallel systems to manage these needs, in the form of disability service providers; they had devised elaborate funding and support systems to allow the management of these issues and the provision of large-scale retrofitting (Houghton & Fovet, 2012). At no point however—apart from very few exceptions—have colleges and universities, as a sector, tackled inclusion head on. The post-secondary sector perpetuates the illusion that access to learning can occur outside the class and that instructors do not and should not have responsibility over it. These institutions adhere—despite all the literature—to the belief that access to learning is solely a legal responsibility, not a reality that should be anchored in the pedagogical practices of the class. Up to now, the post-secondary sector has examined the needs expressed by students through the deficit model, refusing to accept that pedagogy needs to be revisited and adapted, and that student centeredness must translate into pragmatic and proactive curriculum redesign. At long last though, the realization is taking place here too: that access and inclusion are but two sides of the same coin and that the former cannot be achieved without the latter (King-Sears, 2009).

The title of this paper highlights the need not just for awareness of the synchronicity between access and inclusion, but more importantly the urgency for the creation of a roadmap for the delicate process of navigating this synchronicity. What is meant by navigating a delicate conjuncture? Most educators are aware, implicitly or explicitly, of the paradigm shift described above. They see the growing need for the natural osmosis between these concepts to dribble down to the classroom, where it must trigger a rethink of our teaching practices and curriculum aspirations. However, navigating this conjuncture remains a very tenuous task for our society. The process that lies ahead is both crucial and delicate. Firstly, translating our concerns for access to learning and our focus on the social model of disability into our daily teaching practices represents a monumental reflective task (Novak, 2011). Educators need to be motivated and supported through this time- and resource-expensive process. Turning inclusion and access practices into a reality, available to all students, is a steady move towards more sustainable pedagogical practices, but it is also a heavy burden. It is important therefore for governments to realize what is at stake and support this change. Likewise, the merging of access and inclusion represents a complex process of change for schools and post-secondary institutions. The successful on-terrain fusion of both concepts will only continue to occur if we are willing to rethink 21st century pedagogy. The management of change process, which must accompany this rethink, is however not necessarily the forte of education as a field, whether this is examined globally or institutionally. Now that we have come to a global realization of the synchronicity between access and inclusion, our jurisdictions, governments, and school boards need to nurture, through effective and delicate management of change, the willingness of educators to navigate this paradigm shift. There is one substantial motivational force for these factors and conditions to align at this stage of history. Access, and therefore inclusion, is indeed no longer a minority discourse—it is very much a majority concern (Mole & Fovet, 2013).

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Commentary

Reflections on a Career Devoted to the Integration of Handicapped Children

Karen Hulme

ABSTRACT

In this interview, retired educator Karen Hulme recounts how her interest in working with disabled children began at age six, a passion that led her to become a camp counsellor in her late teens at the School for Crippled Children. Next, she discusses her 42-year career at the Mackay Centre School, and some of the early initiatives that were in place to not only help integrate handicapped children into regular schools, but also introduce regular kids into the Mackay Centre—a process called “reverse integration.” She talks about the “Circle of Friends,” a school program that promotes social interactions, facilitates awareness, and breaks down barriers between students with and without disabilities. Lastly, she discusses the importance of educators in leadership positions to “... know *who* these kids are, what their needs are, and what their parents’ needs are ...”

Karen, you’ve been a highly respected educator in inclusive education for many years. Can you tell us about what attracted you to this area and why?

This is rather interesting. When I was six years old I had my tonsils out at the Montreal General [Hospital]. And every day I’d pass the school for crippled children...it was called just the School for Crippled Children. It was underneath the Shriner’s [Hospital], built into the side of the mountain. Every time I went up to the hospital they’d be dragging the kids out and putting them on the buses. And they’d take them from the wheelchair and throw them over their shoulders.

I would look at these kids being thrown over the shoulders of these bus drivers, and I would get so *upset* because it seemed so unfair that people would have to be carried that way—with their bottom in the face of the bus driver.

So, I decided when I was six years old that I was going to work with handicapped children. I don't know why. When I was 13 I phoned up the school...the school for crippled children...and asked them if I could go to the camp as a counsellor. They said I was too young. I called every year. Finally, at the age of 16, they let me go and I was there for several years, working. Then, I went to McGill, with the full intention of going to work at the School for Crippled Children up on Cedar, but I didn't end up there because they had just built a new school—they joined with the Mackay School for the Deaf and Dumb. They put the two schools together and it became the Mackay Centre for Deaf and Crippled Children. And I started there the year that it was built, in 1967, and I was there for 42 years. And I never looked at anything else. My parents didn't particularly like this idea at all. They wanted me to be a doctor but there was no swaying [me] anywhere along: I was always going to work with handicapped kids.

Many of your years as an educator were spent at Mackay Centre, which has played a unique role in the Montreal community. Tell us about the mission of Mackay Centre.

Mackay Centre was originally built as a school in 1965. It was donated by Domtar, and a wonderful man who was the president at the time. As time went on, more and more physiotherapists, occupational therapists, audiologists, and so on, started coming to the building to service the children. Eventually, it became a rehabilitation centre with a school, instead of a school with a rehabilitation centre. It had outpatients...all the kids in the school...and the outpatients [were] the biggest part of the building. It's now still a school and still a rehabilitation centre, but there is a question as to whether it's going to be a school or a rehabilitation centre—the government is working on that right now.

Can you tell us how children from outside the school became a part of that school?

Initially Mackay serviced all the Maritime provinces, Quebec, and part of Ontario. We had a huge residence of about 400 kids. Then it became just for the Island of Montreal... The children who came to Mackay needed rehabilitation and their parents couldn't be taking them three and four times a week—maybe to two different kinds of services—it became overwhelming. So they sent their children to live—or live *and*

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attend the school—where they could get the rehabilitation services. They usually stayed three or four years, and then they went back out into the regular system.

In 1974, there were a few children who left Mackay and were integrated into regular schools. Through the parents I noticed it really wasn't working. The schools weren't ready for them, there were no architectural barriers removed...it just was not working. So I went to the then Protestant School Board and asked them if I could have a job integrating kids in the regular schools—not knowing *anything* about it. But it seemed as though somebody needed to be out there helping these kids being integrated. The school board gave me the job. So I thought, well, what about all the kids in the school? They're not going to have regular kids around them. Why don't we bring regular kids to Mackay? So at the same time that we started integrating them out—and we integrated them out as groups, we didn't just integrate individual kids—we started bringing regular kids to Mackay. It became a very popular program. We tried to have [an] equal number of handicapped children and regular children in the same classroom, and we tried to match them up. We had a whole system of how we would evaluate the kids, and who we would choose.

We had no trouble at all because the kids really wanted to be there. Many kids who want[ed] to nurture other kids, who want[ed] to take care of them, also want[ed] to push a wheelchair. That was a very popular activity when they first started. After they'd been there a few months, they didn't do that any more. It was *fabulous* when it first started. I would go to the school and say to the principal, "Would you like to take a handicapped child in your school?" and if the principal said, "Well, what can I do? That sounds wonderful," I would get all excited and would integrate a child into that school, even if it wasn't in their area—at least we were *doing something*. If the area where the child came from didn't want the child, or said we couldn't make the architectural changes, or whatever, we would go to another school. Keith School in LaSalle *wanted our kids* so, we moved a whole class of about eight really, really disabled children there for three months. I went down there every day and helped them integrate them. We took them away to science camp and did all kinds of activities with them. After three months, there was no way these kids wanted to come back, and there was no way that we could take them back because the parents would have been so upset. So, we left them. That group of kids stayed there for quite a few years.

And then we started integrating individual children into individual schools, and that was a huge problem because the architectural changes—the boards didn't have the money to do it and the teachers weren't trained. There were certain schools, like Riverdale, that did a *fabulous* job, and then there were other schools that just didn't

have anybody in the school who was trained for special education, and these kids had a lot of special needs. They also needed *some* rehab, and the school boards weren't, at that time, providing rehab. Mackay Centre was not going to travel out to the schools very often, maybe once a year to do an evaluation. So, it became a real problem.

What do you think the children who came from the school system to Mackay Centre learned from that experience?

Incredible amount of stuff. I remember one child coming for two days, and she [said], "I really want to come to Mackay Centre but are all these children going to die while I'm here?" And so I had to explain to her what cerebral palsy was, spina bifida—she was very, very bright—and so that she wouldn't think that anybody was going to...everything was going to be fine, and she was going to have a wonderful time. She stayed for three years and she was really a fabulous reverse-integrated kid. We really enjoyed having her because she was a real ambassador: when she left Mackay she went out into other schools and talked about them all the time and had her best friend come over and visit her school, and they played wheelchair basketball. The regular kid learned how to use a wheelchair, and still does, and she plays it professionally. And, she's not handicapped. But her best friend comes along with her and they play wheelchair basketball.

That's a success story. Can you share another success story that you experienced in your tenure there?

Well, that really is the biggest one because they're friends, they're real friends. Lots of kids went out and really did very well academically, but lots of them went out and didn't make friends. And for me, that was the most important thing—was that they made friends. At assemblies, if they didn't make friends, often they were unhappy, and we knew they were unhappy and we talked to them about it and sometimes we even got them help. But, I found that children who were physically disabled wanted to have friends who were also physically handicapped because they understood each other's needs. Not the regular kids who are running away from them all the time, or have other friends and want to be cool, and so on, and it wasn't cool to hang around with a child in a wheelchair—and it was, the friendship aspect was, a huge issue. For me it was. You know, if we couldn't get the kid in the school we'd find a way: we built ramps in the middle of the night to get kids into schools. And we could do all those things if we had to, but if they didn't have a friend, you know, they were just going down the hall just all by themselves in their electric wheelchair, eating by themselves, nobody ate with

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them, and they were so lonely. They wondered why no one befriended them and what was wrong with them: everyone seemed to have friends and they didn't. This worrying took up a lot of their time. They wanted to be part of the group and they didn't know how to do it.

And so there weren't a great number of success stories, but the best ones were the kids who went out into schools where there were reverse-integrated kids who had already been to Mackay, and who understood the situation and knew how to act with a person who is handicapped. There was nobody in the schools who *knew* that when you talked to a person in a wheelchair you get down at their level, and you have eye contact with them. You don't talk down to them, like this [demonstrating], you sit in the chair beside them. Things like this, they didn't know, and they were uncomfortable, and they didn't know if this person was sick or why were they in a wheelchair. Because they were never given the opportunity—the person in the wheelchair—to talk about it, and the teachers didn't have time to run programs to have these kids make friends. And often they had an aid who sat beside them, and who helped them either with writing—they didn't have computers when we first started to do their writing and help them with their academics—so their friend was the aid, not the other children, not the peer group.

You've suggested some challenges that you faced in your experiences at the Centre, can you talk about any other challenges?

The biggest challenges are, at the board level, transportation. Having the proper kinds of buses: the kids are transported properly and tied in properly, and the bus drivers understand what to do if something goes wrong in the bus—that's a big issue. And another one is toileting, that's a huge issue. The people who are taking these kids to the bathroom—are often not trained—and there have been issues around that. Because those are two things that these kids *need*, that other kids don't need. But it would be nice if they could travel on the same bus with the regular kids, but they can't.

Can you tell us about the program called "Circle of Friends," developed by Evelyn Lustaus and her colleagues, which you implemented.

Oh, I really love this program. It started off where you went into a classroom where there was a handicapped child, and I would teach a program using consecutive circles, and talk about different kinds of friends: the friends who we're closest to, the friends we're not close to...then I would talk about the child in the wheelchair whose

friends were the grandmother, the parents, the caretaker, the doctors, the physio, the audiologist—whoever it was. And then we would talk about *how can we change that circle?* If I come back in a week, *what can we do to change that circle?* So, we'd take all the words that had to do with friendship, and all the words that had to do with loneliness, and we'd talk about this and set up a program for this child—the whole class would do it.

And then—if I could work with the principal—we would set up some program where, either the most popular kids in the school, or some other kids who have needs and the popular kids, would have special roles in the school as prefects or even...we did a lot of recycling of juice containers...and they were every assembly, these kids (including the kids in the wheelchairs) were all talked about at the assembly about what a wonderful job they were doing, and so everybody knew them and everybody knew that they were doing something special in the school. This was *really* important, this "Circle of Friends," and we would also go out at night sometimes. We would go to a movie, all of us together, the group that we had decided in the school that was going to support this handicapped person. And it took up a great amount of time and a great amount of writing, and a lot of the teachers didn't want to get involved... the kind of writing where, "Let's today talk about one of the issues around friendship. We're all going to write about it." And the teachers had a curriculum they had to finish, and they didn't necessarily want to finish *my* curriculum. And some of them were terrific.

I remember at Lindsay Place we used to have a barbecue every two weeks, after school. We'd have a barbecue out in the backyard, on the field. And these kids... anybody who wanted to come, could come, and we would...the special needs kids were all there...all the special needs kids in the school. And it was *really* successful and the school was *really* behind it, and really wanted us to do it. And, Keith School, they were great on that one. They really helped me a lot. I did it in many, many schools, but I'll tell you it's lucky I wasn't married and didn't have a family because my whole life was the "Circle of Friends"—probably for 10 years. It really took...but what joy I had! I mean it wasn't a job, it was what I wanted to be doing, I wanted to make a difference for these kids who were going up to regular school.

What advice would you have for educators in leadership positions about inclusive education?

I think they've got to know the individuals. They've got to know *who* these kids are, what their needs are, and what their parents' needs are—they really have to

understand it and try and make it work. If it doesn't work it's a huge catastrophe. The school, everybody knows about it, and it's terrible for the child. But if it works, it's wonderful! It really is wonderful, and if the child is really included in everything, and everybody makes sure the child is included—we went horseback riding every year with the reverse-integrated kids and the regular kids. *Everybody* went horseback riding. *Everybody* has to do it. You know, I don't care if you're in a wheelchair: we're all going horseback riding! I think it's really important that the principal wants it to happen.

The schools that worked best were the schools that took groups of kids in from Mackay, and maybe had a separate class, and then fed them out into different things when they could do it, and made them very visible in the school and made sure that they ate in the cafeteria, and that other students in the school were involved with these kids—somehow, whatever way they decided to do it. But one child going into a school, unless the school was very excited to have this child, often was very lonely and really didn't do well.

There was a child that went to John Rennie [High School] and it was very difficult to understand his speech. He had cerebral palsy, and his parents were here as ambassadors from some country, and were just wonderful parents. They wanted him in a regular school. He crawled around the floor when he had to, to get to different places, and *he* taught the other people how to treat him. *He* taught the other children how to treat him, and he did it through humour and he had everybody on his side. He had the kind of personality and that makes a big difference—that makes a big difference for the teachers. You know, they have to learn to work with what they've got. If they don't *know* these kids that they have, they don't know what to do with them.



Karen Hulme graduated from McGill University with a B. Ed. in Teaching, a M. Ed. in Special Education, and a M. Ed. in Reading. For 42 years she worked at Mackay Centre, a school for children with physical disabilities, where she taught, administered a reverse integration program, and carried out the program of integration of physical handicapped children for the English Montreal School Board. Karen also taught in the Faculty of Child Care Counselling at College Marie Victorin as well as in Nigeria for the Canadian Teachers Federation. In addition, through the Katavik School Board she helped identify children who are deaf and/or physically handicapped and helped set up their programs in Northern Quebec. She is currently president of the board of CARE, an organization providing a recreational and educational program for adults with severe physical disabilities.



Commentary


The Transgender Child: A Lesson in Acceptance

Wren Kauffman

ABSTRACT

In this interview, 12-year-old Wren Kauffman shares his earliest memories of “not feel[ing] right” in his body and how he conveyed this powerful sentiment to his parents. Wren and his mother Wendy discuss the transgender journey their family has gone on, which initially started by contacting the Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services at the University of Alberta. Wren recounts how he told friends and classmates that he was transgender, talks about the support and openness he has received from teachers, friends, and schools, and of the critical importance of acceptance. Issues such as bullying, gender-neutral spaces, and diversity are also discussed. In addition, Wendy emphasizes the key role education plays in the inclusion of transgender children: “If we can start from a place of education, and explain that there is a really wide kind of variety of different ways that people can be born, that’s going to help society and people in general understand that transgender people are in the world.”

How and when did you know that your gender identity was not congruent with being a girl?

 knew as early as I can remember, pretty much. It just didn’t feel right...I just didn’t match the body I was in. I always, before I went to bed, I wished to myself, “Could I please wake up to be a boy?” And every morning I was really upset because it didn’t happen, but as early as I can remember it just in any way did not feel right.

Tell us the story about how you and your family dealt with this issue.

Wren: I think it was in grade 4. I told my mom one night and I was crying to her, I said, "Mom, I just want to be a boy!" So, then later she told my dad, of course, and then they both looked up "transgender" on Google because they didn't know much about it, and they found Kris Wells.

Wendy: Avy (our younger daughter) told me one night as I was tucking her in, "Mom, Wren is a boy," and I felt a little bit defensive and said, "I know that Wren is a boy," and Avy said, "No, mom, he is a boy—he doesn't *want* to be a boy." So that was different. The way she worded it, it hit me differently, and then I went and I talked to you and you were very upset and you said that you felt very different and you were having a hard time sleeping because you were thinking about it all the time. And so it was then, that night my husband came home, and Greg, the next day he looked up information on the web, and he found Kris Wells' name and Kris works for the Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services at the University of Alberta. From that point on there was still stuff to sort out, but it helped just saying to Wren that we loved him no matter what and we finally understood. That we would help him. Kris had recommend that we see our pediatrician, and although that meeting was positive in some ways...

Wren: ...it was also really depressing in other ways...

Wendy: ...I think it left Wren feeling like nothing concrete had really happened because the pediatrician said that it was just a phase, and he felt that it would be just a phase, and that the longer we waited, the more likely Wren would, you know, align, and this didn't feel right with Wren...like that he could still look like a boy, dress like a boy, and that...

Wren: ...but I'd have to go through puberty...

Wendy: ...but that he'd have to potentially go through puberty as a girl, and so the pediatrician wouldn't refer us to a specialist in the city, and that was kind of odd that he wouldn't let us see Dr. Warneke even though we wanted to. So, we ended up finding, Kris was able to get us in to see Dr. Warneke. And then, from that point on, after we saw Dr. Warneke, he too was very affirming to Wren, and he said that as parents we were doing all that we needed to

do and that we were going to let Wren lead. It was after that, in March of grade 5 that Wren transitioned at school.

Wren: There were almost no issues or hurdles, everyone was super super accepting, and it was really great to know I had that kind of community at school. It was really nice 'cause all the teachers were very accepting. I think most of them kind of knew what was going on because I'd always dressed like a boy. I think I act like a boy, you know.

How about your friends? Can you tell us a little bit about your friends?

Wren: Oh yeah, all my friends were really good. A couple of them had questions, like, what's the bathroom situation going to be? And I used a staff bathroom because that's what we decided on. But all my friends were really accepting and they called me "he" and stuff, and they accepted me as a boy because that's who I am.

Wendy: That summer it was a transition for our family; there was still some times when people had trouble with pronouns, and so that took a little while, like a few months to change pronouns because that's very hard. And also for parents, it was more permanent. Once you start talking about your child with different pronouns you really feel that this is real and it's changing. I've said before that there is a bit of grieving for something that you really didn't even know you had: I didn't know what Wren would be like as a girl, as a teen or as a woman, but it was what I thought I had been given. And so it was like having a new child, having a son all of a sudden and it was quite lovely and pleasurable, but there was also a bit of a loss and still worry. I was still worried that at some point we would hit a hurdle of him being teased or possibly hurdles at school. Do you want to talk a little bit about what it was like then when you went to Victoria?

Wren: I didn't want classmates to know right away...well it was kind of because they automatically know me as trans, as soon as I started school, kind of felt like they would think of me as a "trans" boy, not the boy who is "trans," right, so I didn't want that to happen. I ran into some people from Camp FYrefly, which is a really good camp for LGBTQ kids, and so we were kind of talking in the hallway and my two friends were there, and so what happened is he asks (Well, I'm kind of forgetting from Camp FYrefly), "Are you LGBTQ...are

you gay or trans?" And I said, "trans," but my two friends were there, which I kind of forgot about, and they said, "Oh, you're trans?" And, yeah, just don't like tell anyone and they didn't tell anybody for a long time...it was about four or five weeks...and then they told their two other friends...

Wendy: ...but it wasn't in a mean way...it was just because they accepted you and they just forgot that it was a secret. And then you just got tired of...

Wren: ...everybody finding out it was a secret, and then so I kind of just told my mom and teachers can I just come out to the class? And as soon as I figured out it would take four weeks for that to happen... I went ahead and said, "Tell your friends and then we'll kind of sort it out from there that I'm trans." A couple of the kids, not knowing they said, they winked at me in the hall, "Mr. Kauffman," or some of them didn't believe it. Some of them were like, "I need proof" and I said, "I'm not going to pull down my pants." And so, they didn't quite get it at first. But then, my really awesome teacher, Ms. Taylor, she had a discussion with the class and she kind of explained it that "transgendered" is a good thing—and we'd been doing this all year.

Wendy: She'd incorporated it knowing she had a transgendered child in the class. She had really started to use the language and talk about it like all other diversities that we mention and learn about. She started including LGBTQ as part of that. The Vic is an art school but it's also an international baccalaureate school, so they wanted a global method of teaching so kids know what's going on in the world, so that was really great that the kids already had the language for it.

Wren: And as soon as everybody...after the conversations with Ms. Taylor, what happened was everybody was really nice and they had a little comment box 'cause some kids could have been afraid to raise their hands and talk to me directly, not because I'm trans, but because sometimes saying stuff about a question you don't really understand can be nerve wracking. And so, a lot of kids put questions in (or comments) and all of them were extremely positive. Some of them were questions like, "Why do gay people get teased sometimes?" And that's just not right. It's not nice that people get teased because of their sexuality or gender. But some of them were like, "I still think of you in the exact same way...you're super awesome...we all love you," and stuff like that. Everyone was really nice.

Wendy: We've had two opportunities where two different Edmonton public schools have really supported us, and really helped to educate those around, and it's really been very seamless. It's frustrating to hear that in other places kids don't have it so easy. And I mean, there still could be a time when Wren's "something" happens, but so far not, and the school has seemed so ready for it—they're ready for any issues that might come up. And, we're ready, too.

Wren: ...meaning if they're mean to me and they don't like transgendered people, then you don't need to be a part of my life. You can just go and, I don't know, continue with yours. Don't be mean to me and I won't have a problem with you.

What kinds of advice would you give to parents of children who are grappling with gender identity?

Wren: My mom, I know she's really accepting and stuff, but you got to keep in mind she never had a daughter. You've always had a son, but you just didn't know it. And so, if your kid is really upset and depressed about what their gender is, then why not just let them be who they are. It wouldn't be any different.

Wendy: And what I've said all along is it's hard sometimes for parents to really listen to their kids. I think now, this generation, does parent differently and we do hear them, but, I think that listening to your child and hearing what they have to say, and also, I think a lot of children are gender fluid too in the beginning and if we can start at a place of just letting them have choices that are *their* preferences and not influence play, not say those things like, "Why are you dressing like a princess? You're a little boy. You need to dress with these kinds of costumes." Or even just lining kids up according to gender. If we can start to look at gender-neutral language or not influence gender-specific play, I think that can also go a long way in helping to let kids know that it doesn't matter. But the world we live in right now is very gendered, and I think that's why it's so hard to wrap your head around, we're very used to gendered individuals and kids, and so it kind of throws us. And one of the questions that I ask people who actually do think they're very open and understanding with their children is, "What would you do if you were shopping for your child and you were in Mountain Equipment Co-op and your little boy really wanted the pink jacket?" And that stops a lot of people because most people would influence in that moment—they would

not allow their boy to wear a feminine colour. I think that's a good lesson for all of us, that it's really about preference and about choice and children should have that freedom to express what they like in their play and in their dress. You know, just in their life they should be able to choose, and so that's kind of the advice that I would give: to just be open.

Before we go on to the next question could I ask you, as the mother—you're obviously a very inclusive family and very supportive—can you give us a couple of tangible examples of how things came up that you were able to support Wren in this transition.

Wendy: He just whispered to me right now that it's the pronouns. If we go right back to that time where he was crying in bed and saying, "I don't feel like I am a girl and I know I'm different," I think from that point on there were all these little steps and one of them was cutting his hair—like for a parent to let go of what is a prescribed idea of what a girl's/female's gender expression should look like, or a male's gender expression. So that, it is challenging, and I guess my advice would be to just be confident in knowing your own child. So, I know I wasn't confident at first. I was just worried—I was worried that people, that kids would start teasing Wren, that he would be alienated because he was looking more and more like a male, and in our situation we were lucky that that wasn't the case. But it is lucky because we know when other kids transition that it wasn't so seamless, and there was a lot of hurt and alienation—and I guess my advice would be to just be supportive of your child and then try to find those places that would foster this individual. It is hard, and I think that's something else that we can't really...it's not really fair to not validate it. You can't just go from a gendered world where we have children that are boys and girls, and then just immediately let it go and just be like, "Oh, great! I had a girl but they want to be a boy, so I'm just going to let them be a boy." I think every parent kind of has to move through the situation at their own pace and they have to go through their own process, and they have to validate that it is a challenge, it's hard, and the whole point of Wren and our family deciding to be open and talk about it is so that someone else can hear me saying, "It wasn't easy." Because I think that seeing it in the media, hearing our story, hearing about it, you are kind of getting the end where we are healed—we've moved through it. Because there was a time where pronouns, that was really hard for me. It felt so real, so permanent. My advice is yes, this is real, and to help them and to listen to them. But also in the same sense I'm not saying it isn't challenging.

Was it any more difficult or easier for your husband in this situation?

Wendy: No, Greg and I, again, luckily we both were very much on the same page in terms of helping and supporting him. I think there are times we might have argued about how long stuff would take, because I kind of felt like if we're doing this, let's just do it, I was just ready. And so sometimes he was a little more cautious because he liked the idea of just having a bit more time to think it through, to maybe plan who he would tell, and talk to the teachers. Wren gave an example of how, when he didn't move to the other school and he hadn't been super open about it, but then when he was ready I really didn't think that it was that big of a deal that he just tell his peers at his own pace and in his own time. Where Greg thought, no, we should have another more formal discussion in the classroom with the teacher to help guide it. Both ways they have their positives and it's kind of nice that we had that...we sort of maybe tempered each other a bit. And, he didn't have any more difficult times. I think sometimes in the beginning for, this is what I've heard for parents who have boys who know that they're actually girls, in our society it's a little more challenging when that happens for men because their peer groups can really frown on boys being feminine, coming across as feminine, wanting to be feminine. We don't have an equivalent word for "tomboy." There is no positive equivalent term for "tomboy" for a boy. That's kind of telling, too, that in our society being more feminine is frowned upon and less accepted. Whereas, I think with a little girl who wants to be a boy, I mean, Wren all along was accepted and everyone was just like, "Oh, she's just a tomboy, or she's just, you know, a rough and tumble kind of girl"—it was sort of celebrated, it wasn't frowned upon. I think that for fathers and for mothers of boys it could be a little more challenging because of how our society and culture is.

How could schools and society in general deal more effectively with situations involving transgender identity? It sounds like you've had a really very supportive situation. In less supportive situations, what might you suggest?

Wendy: It's easy to say the things we could do, but it's hard to actually put them in place partly because of education. Again, that's kind of why we're doing it. I want people to hear that, you know, this just isn't just my husband and I saying, "Oh, you want to be a boy? Ok, go ahead and be a boy and we're not being responsible parents." When you live with someone who is

transgender, it is different than going through a phase. It's not like we're helping Wren to be confused, which we've had people say. So, if we can start from a place of education, and explain that there is a really wide kind of variety of different ways that people can be born, that's going to help society and people in general understand that transgender people are in the world. And so that's one of the things I'm really thinking will help in the future when you hear about schools that are really caught on the bathroom issues.

Wren, do you have anything that you would like to add to that?

Wren: I've had really good schools and stuff, and I know that I have a really awesome school right now, and I had a really awesome school in elementary, too, but one thing is the bathroom situation, which I think we've already talked about. The other thing, is as I said advice for parents, is just accept it. It's perfectly normal. Maybe other people don't have that issue; it might not be common, but it's good. Because it teaches your students about diversity, which is okay. It's just good for everyone because then nobody's upset. And if somebody has a problem with it then they can use the staff bathroom.



Wren Kauffman is a 12-year-old transgender boy who resides in Edmonton, Alberta with his mother, father, and younger sister. Wren always felt that he was a boy. At age nine he transitioned, and now openly identifies himself with the male gender. He is a passionate advocate and activist for LGBTQ issues. Wren has completed grade 7, and enjoys art, riding his bike, skateboarding, baking, and reading books.

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Stakeholders' Inquiries About the Systemic Inclusion of Late Adolescent Newcomers to Canada: Moving From Questions to Understandings

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ABSTRACT

Drawing on data collected during a larger, year-long ethnographic study of a pilot program designed to serve late adolescent newcomers to Canada, this paper uses notions of the phenomenological approach to consider the "inclusion" of late adolescent newcomers in Canada's education system. The present consideration seeks to frame how some stakeholders implicated in a pilot program to help this particular learner population came to understand the forces that seemingly perpetuated the students' oppression within the education system. In particular, issues of the parameters of language education, federal and provincial education policies, and funding were identified as the key influences within the phenomenon.

 **etween** the ages of 15 and 24, there are numerous key milestones that often come to shape the life of a person in Canada—the departure from secondary education, possible entry into post-secondary education, entry into the workforce, the development and/or creation of long-term partnerships, establishing an independent household, and even having children of one's own. Sometimes referred to as "Generation 1.5," these adolescent and emerging adults who arrive in Canada at that point in their life often delay or otherwise compromise these milestones because of their transition to their new country, culture, language, and often, educational need (Crossman & Pinchbeck, 2012). While some students arriving at 15 have been able to develop the requisite English proficiency needed to find academic success and even move on to post-secondary education (Roessingh, 2008; Roessingh & Kover, 2002, 2003;

Roessingh, Kover, & Watt, 2005), Corak (2011) has discovered newcomers who enter the Canadian school system after the age of 13 are the least likely group to complete high school and earn a full diploma. The difficulty is attributed to the challenge of developing sufficient proficiency in English or French in the time period needed to earn the requisite academic credits to graduate (i.e., before they turn 21); consequently, between 20 and 25% of the newcomer population entering school after the age of 13 will not graduate (Corak, 2011; Watt & Roessingh, 2001).

Much of the research about newcomers between 15 and 24 has largely considered students enrolled in traditional high school programs or post-secondary programs (e.g., Crossman & Pinchbeck, 2012; Derwing, DeCorby, Ichikawa, & Jamieson, 1999; Roessingh, 2004; Watt & Roessingh, 2001); these students seemingly arrived before the age of 17 and had the requisite time to establish the language and educational credentials to move forward in most circumstances, but there is little known about students for whom a more traditional high school program is not considered a viable option because of their older age of arrival (e.g., 18 to 21), such as the students in the program featured in this paper. Though these students are technically eligible for adult and/or post-secondary education by virtue of their age and also simultaneously fall in the accepted age window for traditional high school, these contexts may not be suitable either; they either require language proficiency or educational credentials the students do not have or provide access to a very basic English language education that limits their job and later educational options. Quite simply, it appears that the educational system may not be certain as to where to “include” these students, and by virtue of competing educational networks, unclear policies, and in the case of this paper, limited previous experience with newcomers in a community, these older teens and younger adults may be one of the most vulnerable group of newcomers arriving in Canada.

The purpose of this article is to draw on data collected during a study initially deemed as a critical ethnography: a year-long study of a pilot program¹ created to respond to the unique needs of late adolescent newcomers to an area in New Brunswick. Yet, as data were transcribed and analyzed, approaches more typical to phenomenological research were required, and it is with that approach the present paper is presented. Over the course of the year, many of the participants in the study and observers of the program under study considered the juxtaposition of “inclusion” and “exclusion” within the lives of these students, as they sought to unravel the systemic forces that converged to make these students’ learning experiences the most difficult they had ever encountered. Thus, this paper explores the following questions:

1. How are newcomers between the ages of 18-21 included within the language education systems?
2. How do policies (either federal or provincial) foster or limit such inclusion?
3. How does money encourage or discourage inclusion of newcomer language learners?

To those familiar with the educational and life experiences of newcomers to Canada, the shared results will echo what has already been found in the previous literature, both scholarly and applied (e.g., Coehlo, 2012; Gunderson, D'Silva, & Odo, 2012). Yet, this study is being shared because it endeavours to capture some of the philosophical and political questions the participants negotiated while they were in the process of solving a practical problem that emerged in their community. In so doing, it is the goal of the present paper to demonstrate how such questions become key to understanding systems of oppression at work within an educational system; though this realization is not novel for many in the scholarly community, it was novel for the participants here. If social change is to be expected, such transformation in views is essential, and this paper offers a path for raising such awareness.

Research Approach and Theoretical Lens

The phenomenological approach to research facilitates explorations of shared experiences within a group typically ranging in size from five to 25 (Creswell, 2013). The present study draws lightly, but mostly on the ideas of hermeneutical phenomenology (van Manen, 1990), in that the role of the researcher has been to seek out ideas that intersect and interplay off of one another within an experience without necessarily extricating him/herself from the construct under consideration. In this study, the experience is framed as the "inclusion of late adolescent newcomers in schooling," and finds some sort of convergence within differing perceptions offered by the five stakeholders. Phenomenological research tends to deploy interviews and conversations as the most common data collection method.

From the outset of the larger initial study, a critical theory lens was applied to the inquiry (Willis et al., 2008), even though the traditional attributes often considered in these inquiries—race, class, gender—were not the driving forces (Fay, 1987). Social class was certainly a factor, but language was the central issue here; critical theory has been previously applied in considerations of language teaching and learning, as one's ability to access language education becomes markers of progress and status within a community (e.g., Arnett & Mady, 2010).

Methodology

The data were collected in an urban area of New Brunswick during the 2012-2013 academic year. For the present study, data from multiple semi-structured interviews and conversations with the five individuals identified as the “Stakeholders” were used. Again, these data were collected as part of the larger critical ethnography of the pilot program in which I held the role of a participant-observer. I transcribed the interviews, while notes about the conversations were maintained in a field note log not long after they happened. In the present paper, the quotes and excerpts from the interviews are used to give context to the more formal inquiries and explorations of the research literature that these conversations inspired; the selected quotes often provide the most representative positioning of the idea. As the questions and notions emerged within the interviews and conversations, it was often my role to provide and/or seek information to respond to or clarify their conceptions or misconceptions presented by the stakeholders. In that way, I was mediating the phenomenon as it occurred.

Participants

Five of the stakeholders implicated in the pilot project drive the exploration here. The Stakeholders are presented in Figure 1. Some identifying details are omitted to ensure confidentiality of the informants; many informants were concerned about how their comments would be perceived, given the often political nature of working with newcomers to Canada. With the exception of one (Stakeholder 3), the others were largely unaware of the theoretical and empirical literature about this student population.

During the time of the study, I also spoke regularly with other members of the local and educational community who had knowledge of the school and/or the needs of newcomers in the local area. These details will often be used to help give additional context to the ideas being shared by the Stakeholders or explain some of the observations I had made while visiting or working with the students in the program. Along with a few other individuals who were not official participants in the study, Stakeholders 1, 2, 3, and 5 were some of the compelling forces behind the creation of the pilot program.

Stakeholder 1:	Member of school leadership team; regularly involved in enrollment of new students to the school (no formal training for work with newcomers).
Stakeholder 2:	School-based individual who worked for a local community organization. This individual would often serve as a bridge between the school and many newcomer families; had personal family experiences with immigration to Canada, but no formal training.
Stakeholder 3:	Member of school community, but in and out of context regularly due to changing job demands. Previous experience teaching English as a Second Language, but no formal training.
Stakeholder 4:	New member of school community who had daily contact with students in the pilot program. Previous experience teaching English as a Second Language; also had personal family experience with immigration to Canada, but no formal training.
Stakeholder 5:	Member of school leadership team; regularly involved in enrollment of new students to the school.

Fig. 1: Stakeholders participating in the study of the pilot program

Results

How Newcomers Between 18-21 Are Included Within the Language Education System

Inclusion in the local community's language education system. The city in which the pilot program was based did have many English language classes offered through the taxpayer-supported "Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada" (LINC) program. The Government of Canada (2013b) touts that 60,000 newcomers a year, on average, attend LINC classes; this is about one third of the immigrant population ages 15 and older that arrives in Canada each year. The LINC classes are mapped to the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB). As shared on the homepage of its website,

The Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks is the centre of expertise in support of the national standards in English and French for describing, measuring and recognizing second language proficiency of adult immigrants and prospective immigrants for living and working in Canada. (2013)

A key word in this description is “adult”; though newcomers as of 18 are welcome to join LINC classes in most areas (settlement.org, 2012), several of the students in the pilot program (who were 17²-21) reported that they did not feel comfortable or like the classes. They saw them as the classes to help their parents with lower proficiency in English get better in the language.

In this particular city, the older teens and young adults often pursued the LINC classes if they opted against enrolling at the high school or aged out of the secondary system, as shared by Stakeholder 2. Yet, as several of the stakeholders pointed out, the LINC classes were not the best fit, either. In one of our conversations Stakeholder 3 pointed out that:

LINC isn't equipped to help with the fact that some of the students just [have] huge holes in their education. It also isn't equipped to help the teens who come here having finished schools in their home country but can't get their credits.

Our conversation at that point in time was reflecting on the possible reasons for which the students in the pilot program may not have taken the LINC program seriously (almost half had tried the LINC courses). Though nearly all of the students in the program were refugees, a few had arrived in Canada with evidence of “school completion in their home countries,” but limited to non-existent English and an inability to have those credentials validated. The rest of the students (all of them refugees) recounted in interviews of incomplete educations, despite the presence of schools in the refugee camps where many of them had lived since birth. Refugee students are often considered within the same political and pedagogical frameworks as more “voluntary” English Learners (ELs), thereby perhaps minimizing the influence of their previous school experiences, psychosocial adjustments, and previous traumas on their learning (Roy-Campbell, 2012; Stermac, Elgie, Clark, & Dunlap, 2012; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012), despite evidence to the contrary. One of my colleagues had strong connections to the LINC program in the area and knew many of the instructors to be aware of the more unique needs of refugee learners, but there was a sense that the teachers were not as well educated as they could have been to help these students.

A local university offered language classes as well, but these classes were more difficult to access. The students for these classes had to demonstrate a certain level of English proficiency and credentials to be admitted, as the program was often viewed as a bridge for the newcomer students into a more traditional post-secondary program. Further, there was the cost factor, which proved to be an additional barrier for nearly all of the students who found themselves in the pilot program; 11 of the 12 students who first enrolled in the program were refugees from Nepal/Bhutan, resettled as part of an agreement between Canada and Bhutan, with support from the United Nations (Citizenship & Immigration Canada, 2013). As refugees, their “money thoughts” were always on the fact they needed to repay loans from the Canadian government for their medical exams and travel costs to Canada, which was always described to me as “many thousand dollars” by the students. Several of the program participants spoke of their interest in going on to higher education, but regularly questioned how to pay for it in relation to the demands to repay the Canadian government. As documented by the Canadian Council for Refugees (2008), these costs are often incredible burdens to give to someone with refugee status.

Language education within Canada. In the world of language education, Canada enjoys a very positive reputation, largely because of the success of the French immersion programs that first launched in the 1960s (Arnett & Mady, 2013). The French immersion programs helped to establish Canada’s commitment to promoting proficiency in both of the country’s official languages within the traditional Anglophone and Francophone populations.

The aforementioned Canadian Language Benchmarks were created to help *adult* learners of either French or English frame the progress in their proficiency; their creation was made possible through extensive support from Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). However, to date, there is no comparable set of standards for helping to monitor English- or French-language development in newcomers in the K-12 system. Though standards can often create their own set of problems in education, three of the five Stakeholders regularly mentioned the need to have a better grasp on what they could and should expect of newcomer students’ growing English proficiency at the high school level. The phrase “best guess” often permeated through most conversations with Stakeholders 1 and 3 about when they felt newcomer students could be expected to have enough proficiency in English to do well in content classes.

In the recently published “Roadmap for Canada’s Official Languages, 2013-2018,” there is attention paid to the opportunities of language education for newcomers:

Every year, 250,000 immigrants come to Canada. The Government of Canada will promote the benefits of Canada's official languages and invest in official language training for newcomers. The Citizenship and Immigration Canada **language training programs for economic immigrants** will help newcomers who are beyond school age acquire the official language skills they need to live and find work in Canada. (Government of Canada, 2013b, p. 13) [Note: bold is copied from the original source]

The programs mentioned in the above quote are the aforementioned LINC classes. What is notable about this quote are the phrases "newcomers who are beyond school age" and "language skills they need to live and work in Canada." Students can technically remain in high school until age 21 to complete the requirements for a diploma. As explained to me by Stakeholders 1, 2, and 5, at various points, this was regularly interpreted to support the enrollment of older teens—17, 18, 19, 20—even though in the best-case scenario, the students at a pilot program's school exited with a "completion certificate" that held no value. At that point, they could turn to LINC.

The above quote could also be viewed as possible evidence of a flawed assumption of the government because of the singular consideration of language education beyond school age. The government may be of the opinion that students who are in K-12 schools do not need specialized language programming, resources, or teacher training (beyond the provided funds to support the language tutor) to learn the language of their new community. It is a common belief that by virtue of being "immersed" in a new language, an individual will develop skills in a language. Thus, it could be the case that current policies and funding priorities are assuming that the "immersion" being experienced by newcomer students—with some support for school settlement and some aspects of language—will sufficiently provide for their language development needs. However, what is happening to these students is technically not "immersion" in the language education sense; these students are experiencing "submersion." Language "immersion" is said to occur when learners of a new language are being taught by someone mindful of the fact that these students will need extra support and different mechanisms to help build meaning and understanding in the language (Wright, 2010). Teachers "immersing" students (like in the French immersion program) are working diligently to help the students build both their language and content knowledge; the teachers' pedagogy is conscious of the reality that the students are learning the new language. Conversely, in a "submersive" setting, the students working to develop new language are not directly supported in this process; teachers typically will not engage in practices or use resources to help the student access the language and content under study to the same extent seen in a traditional immersion classroom, largely because these classes also contain native speakers of the language. The student is essentially left to figure it

out on his/her own (Wright, 2010). Thus, despite a rich tradition of language immersion education, Canada is possibly not transferring that knowledge to the K-12 classrooms in which newcomer students learning the community language are enrolled.

How Policies Foster or Limit Inclusion

Local policies. Early in the year, I reviewed a recently published report in New Brunswick (Porter & AuCoin, 2012) that considered the state of inclusive education within the province; I sought out this report based on the recommendation of a school board administrator who said the report alluded to newcomer students as part of the inclusive education construct. The report was being used in the province to shape many of the plans for professional development and teacher resources for the coming few years.

In the report, there was an overall acknowledgment that inclusive education in the province should respond to the need of the language-learner newcomers. Upon sharing this with Stakeholders 1, 3, and 4, they all independently started revisiting the websites accessible to school personnel to see if they could find more resources to help respond to their queries, thinking that because inclusive education was such a push that academic year, and the benchmark report had acknowledged the newcomers, teacher resources would start increasing. Their searches came up empty for new resources and continued to do so throughout the year. At the end of the school year, a conversation revealed that Stakeholder 5, who had the best access of all stakeholders to school board administration, decided to take this call for inclusive education for newcomers in the Porter and AuCoin report and perpetual lack of resources in any of the teacher portals to more aggressively push for the resources needed at his/her school. As Stakeholder 5 viewed it, he/she had started to see where the disconnects were happening between policy and practice and wanted to start asking more direct questions.

Federal policies. The federal government remains strongly committed to policies and goals meant to facilitate the welcome of up to 250,000 newcomers to Canada each year (Mas, 2014). As has been promoted within the dialogue about immigration to Canada, newcomers are being actively sought to help sustain and expand the workforce in the country (e.g., Mas, 2014; Wingrove, 2014). In the period between 2002 and 2013, Canada welcomed nearly two million immigrants into the country (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012). Of that group, 365,328 immigrants were between the ages of 15 and 24, straddling the phases of adolescence and emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2004). In 2012, the last year for which statistics are available, Canada

processed the arrival of 32,364 adolescents/emerging adults; this number represents the smallest group of newcomers of this age group welcomed in the past 10 years.

In Figure 2, Stakeholder 1, in describing the trend of the newcomer populations who entered his/her school—the site of the pilot program—also described the students’ needs and the challenges that created for the school. Though the response is long, he/she touches on an implicit hierarchy of immigrant students that has emerged within the student population because of how the immigration policies are structured.

Stakeholder 1: Um, probably over the last 7 years, we’ve seen a steady influx of international newcomers to [our urban high school]. Initially, they started coming into the school as candidates for the Provincial Nominee Program, and the majority of students that were coming, were coming from more of the Asian countries. Um, some of them had some working knowledge of English. There were others that did have some significant language challenges, but they did have for the most part, a relatively strong academic background and as candidates for the provincial nominee program, they were also coming with significant financial resources. So, when they experienced some challenges in school, um, sometimes the home would look to secure some outside tutoring to support what was happening within the school, so uh, the numbers were low. The students had pretty strong academic skills and there [were] a lot of resources to support students in that transition. Probably about four years ago, we started seeing the development of more fee-paying programs that are led by the district. And they really aim to draw more upon students who are at about the Grade 9 or 10 level and um, they’re usually looking at a younger audience, so it has been if they are coming in at 14, at 15, years of age, we have quite a bit of time to work with them in order to help them with those language deficits, so I guess in response to that, we started developing various levels of EAL classes to give the newcomers some support.

Investigator: And by “we,” you mean the actual school?

Stakeholder 1: The school. The school.

Fig. 2: Stakeholder 1 description of trend in newcomer population

Investigator: This wasn't something coming from the district, but what the school decided to do, correct?

Stakeholder 1: Just the school. And in response to that, the school itself was having challenging problems delivering the comprehensive program at the high school level and meeting the students' needs in classroom and also addressing the curriculum demands, so we responded by doing EAL³ testing, and doing placements in EAL classes, and sometimes having them audit some courses. It really wasn't too challenging, in the sense that there was significant time for them to build the skills. Over the last few years, we've seen, um, a steady influx of more newcomer students through immigration, and we're starting to find that we're having a lot of older students—18, 19, 20—that are coming to the school looking for high school education. Obviously, they've come to Canada to better themselves, and they are looking for some type of programming to help them with that. But it is very, very challenging when our district does age-appropriate placement. So, if they're coming at 19, that means you're placing them in Grade 12, they can't handle the curriculum. Sometimes, you know, they have the intellectual ability, but the language deficits are just so great and uh, the other challenge that has happened with a lot of the refugee population that has come in, they've maybe come from war-torn countries, and there are some significant academic deficits as well as linguistic deficits because they sometimes have significant interruptions in their schooling.

Fig. 2: Stakeholder 1 description of trend in newcomer population (cont.)

Stakeholder 2 was also in the position to describe some of the teen/young adult experience upon immigration to Canada. Given his/her role as a regular conduit between the schools and home communities, because of his/her work at a community organization, he/she was particularly knowledgeable of the transition difficulties that often emerged. In our interview, Stakeholder 2 outlined the three main facets of his/her work, one of which relates to direct support of the new students, as revealed in Figure 3.

Stakeholder 2: This is a key for us, the newcomer students. There are a lot of things that are not the same. The system is different. Being in Canada is different. In the meantime, when the students come here to Canada, they're in this wonderful age, teen. You can imagine, 13, 14 years old, pulling you from your friends, your boyfriend or your girlfriend, from your friends who speak the same language and are in the same culture, and you're coming to a new environment which is completely different from yours, how are you going to adjust to that? So that is my goal, to help the student to transition to Canada. How am I going to do that? I don't speak their language, but I have to find people who do. This is a teamwork within our organization. As you can see with my work as a settlement worker, working with 14 different schools, I need to be able to work with a wonderful team from my organization. Plus, I'm working with Multicultural Champions teachers. One of my goals is to have the students, each student give a presentation about his or her country and what he or she does. I have to help them build their self-esteem, to showcase their culture, because, it's true, the language could be a barrier, but there are a lot of other ways to communicate. For example, traditional dance, traditional drumming. So this is one of the things I do.

Fig. 3: Stakeholder 2 description of work needed to support teen transitions

Stakeholder 2 was always very good at reminding colleagues that these students—even the ones chronologically adults—were very kid-like in their vulnerabilities because of their recent transition to Canada. He/she always looked to the emotional well-being of the students as the starting point for support, and the students were always going to Stakeholder 2's office for help with a problem or asking about his/her next visit to the school. As revealed in the interview, Stakeholder 2 regularly visited 14 schools, which meant he/she was always on the go and typically not around when students were seeking help. The position was funded by Citizenship & Immigration Canada, which was one indirect way the students were supported in school beyond those outlined in the next section, but the several-hundred student caseload Stakeholder 2 managed across 14 schools instead pointed out how many more resources were still needed.

Paying for the Education of Newcomers to Canada

Local solutions. In Figure 2, Stakeholder 1 makes reference to a fee-paying program that was implemented in the school district where the pilot program took place. The students coming into the schools through this program were typically international students from more affluent families who were seeking either a year in a Canadian school to improve English skills or a four-year Canadian high school experience to increase the likelihood of being accepted into a Canadian university. The families of these students (who often stayed behind in the home country) annually paid in the low five-figures for their child to attend high school in this district.

As the year progressed, it became evident how these fee-paying students had become an integral part of the program structure for supporting English as Additional Language (EAL) education in the district, not just the pilot program. As shared earlier, the school district received some funds from CIC to support the language needs of the newcomer students. In the case of the high school where the pilot program was located, the proportion of newcomer students with lower levels of English proficiency increased each year over the last five, even though the overall population of the school remained constant. The fee-paying students accounted for anywhere between 15-20% of the school's EAL population, and their funds thus helped to subsidize the cost of EAL teachers and resources within the high school. If the fee-paying students were not in the school system, it remains unclear how the classes and supports (though limited they were) would have been funded.

The year I was in the school, there were over 400 students who were identified as English Learners by the administrative team. About 25% of them had skills in English that were minimal enough to warrant daily English classes. Slightly fewer than 80 students (including some fee-payers) had shown up at the start of the school year with no prior evidence of registration at another secondary school elsewhere in Canada, meaning about \$56,000 had been brought into the school from CIC. These students required the \$100/head language test the school had implemented to at least try to gain some sense of their proficiency. The English classes for these newcomers were taught by teachers with certificates from Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) Canada. None of these teachers held permanent contracts at the school, even though one of them had been teaching there for more than five years. Stakeholder 5, who was also involved in the creation and management of the school budget, had successfully moved around funds and in some cases, teaching positions, over the previous few years to address the growing newcomer population. Stakeholder 5 had made requests to the district for additional monies to support the needs of the newcomer students, given that both proportionally and cardinally, this high school had the largest newcomer population in

the entire district. Most of the requests were denied, save for the occasional staffing position when student numbers hit certain levels for a semester, by a certain date. Stakeholder 3 and 5 regularly pointed out how the needs of the newcomer students extended well beyond the year covered by the CIC funds.

Federal support. Every year, considerable amounts of money are funneled from the federal government (typically through Heritage Canada) to provincial programs and organizations that are endeavouring to help Anglophone students in K-12 schools gain proficiency in French or Francophone students in K-12 schools gain proficiency in English. “English Second Language” education—and the funds allocated to it—is not about helping newcomers to an Anglophone district learn English, as is often assumed. As it was explained to me by nearly a dozen language educators from across Canada (some of whom who have been involved in writing grant requests to Heritage Canada), the funds allocated to support “French Second Language” or “English Second Language” programs have been typically envisioned as supporting students “natively” proficient in one of the two languages in the study of the other. They are not comparable funds—at least in the eyes of the Stakeholders in this pilot program—to support newcomer students learning English.

During the year I worked with the pilot program, I was regularly told by several of the stakeholders that the district received a one-time \$650-\$725 stipend for every newcomer student who registered in the district from Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC)—so there was some federal support of the language education of these newcomers. The first time I heard this detail from a Stakeholder, it was typically as a neutral point of information. Over the course of the year, though, the amount became almost a point of sarcasm or derision in conversations as they started to understand the bigger forces at play. Technically, these funds were intended to cover the cost of “tutoring” the newcomer in English; the provided amount allowed for 20-25 hours of one-on-one or small group support in the province where the pilot study was located—what it permitted in other provinces, I am not sure. If the student arrived in Canada with no English proficiency, these CIC-provided funds paid for one full day out of the 2,555 that have been identified as being needed to develop sufficient proficiency in English to succeed in academic tasks (Cummins, 1996). The remaining 2,554 of these needed days must then be funded by the province. This certainly created an additional financial strain for already strapped school districts. The Stakeholders often lamented that such limited funds for this type of language education made it that much harder for the teenage newcomers to get meaningful, ongoing language support.

Conclusion

As revealed earlier, the issues raised by the Stakeholders in this pilot program touched on themes and issues already known to the community of scholars and practitioners who work with newcomer populations—that the parameters of language education, federal and provincial policies, and funding converge to make it difficult for newcomers. The present inquiry showed how this convergence creates additional vulnerability for students between 18 and 21. The interviews, conversations, and anecdotes presented here trace how the stakeholders came to identify, acknowledge, and question these forces and perhaps offer a way for other schools and stakeholders implicated in newcomer education to come to understand the broader issues that challenge the inclusion of newcomer students. At minimum, particularly for schools who are just beginning to see waves of newcomers, there may be comfort in recognizing that the system is likely not set up in a way that best maximizes the chances of newcomer success. At maximum, there is a need to consider how federal language policy for newcomers may be compromising Generation 1.5 because it seemingly conveys that language study in K-12 is a “natural” part of Canadian education and the funding that is allocated to support the language study of newcomers, when reality is really conveying that the country known for immersion is doing a fair amount of linguistic submersion, too. Given that Canada is so intent to grow its population through immigration, it would seem that a more concerted investment in K-12 language programming, particularly for the group of students in the limbo zone of 18-21, is of critical importance in helping these individuals gain access to the kinds of higher education and jobs desired by the federal government. As Stakeholder 3 reminded me several times, “we [Canada] could do so much better.”

Notes

1. I was a participant-observer of this pilot program, having been invited to do so as a visiting scholar to the area. Both my host university and the school system running the program approved the data collection. In addition to collecting data from the students, teacher, and stakeholders of the program, I would also sometimes teach lessons, support classroom instruction, and consult with some of the stakeholders about the issues they were encountering. The program targeted late adolescent newcomers to Canada who were seeking intensive English instruction with the hope of securing jobs in the community and/or advancing into post-secondary education.

2. The 17-year-old student arrived close to the point of turning 18. Because of gaps in her education stemming from her refugee experience, she was considered a better candidate for the pilot program than the traditional high school program.
3. English as an Additional Language; this term is being used more frequently to describe programs responsible for teaching English to newcomers. Previously, the term “English as a Second Language” was often used to describe such a program.

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Using Universal Design for Learning to Construct Inclusive Science Classrooms for Diverse Learners

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ABSTRACT

This article illuminates academic barriers that students with learning disabilities (LD) face in their science classrooms and the ways in which the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework can offer practical ways to promote cognitive access to science education. This article also examines current research on intervention-based practices for students with LD in science classrooms. Drawing on the UDL model, the authors offer a framework for science teachers and practitioners to integrate inclusive practices in their teaching for diverse learners.

Introduction

Scientific inventions, advancements, and issues are undoubtedly an integral part of our lives in the 21st century. Various issues concerning science and society dominate the media, such as the menace of nuclear weapons; problems concerning climate change and global warming; development of new drugs to treat AIDS and cancer; or recalls of contaminated meat from the market. These issues, amongst others, affect all individuals either positively (e.g., new drugs to treat diseases) or negatively (e.g., contaminated meat causes health issues and deaths). For these reasons, all individuals have to make critical science-driven decisions to improve their own as well as their community's well-being. Our daily reliance on scientific and technological advancements has led policy developers, science educators,

and scientists to conclude that *all* students need to develop meaningful scientific literacy (Feinstein, 2011; Holbrook & Rannikmae, 2009). Indeed, the North American science education programs and policies highlight that science education is inclusive and *all* individuals regardless of their gender, cultural background, social circumstances, and career aspirations have the abilities to develop scientific literacy (AAAS, 1993; Achieve, Inc., 2013; CMEC, 1997; MELS, 2007). The key goals of science education in North America emphasize that students should: (a) construct a deeper understanding of scientific concepts; (b) view science-related phenomena as a system of interconnected components that interact with one another; (c) reflect on their own construction of knowledge; (d) develop scientific reasoning and critically evaluate scientific ideas and socio-scientific issues; (e) formulate informed views and perspectives on issues of local and global importance, and (f) appreciate the history of science (Achieve, Inc., 2013; MELS, 2007).

In our science-driven modern society, these goals are of particular significance for all individuals to make sense of the intersections between scientific developments and their social lives. However, these goals might not be reaching many individuals with learning disabilities in Canadian schools. According to the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (2002), learning disabilities result from:

impairments in one or more processes related to perceiving, thinking, remembering or learning. These include, but are not limited to: language processing; phonological processing; visual spatial processing; processing speed; memory and attention; and executive functions (e.g. planning and decision-making). (Official Definition of Learning Disabilities, 2002, para. 1–2)

Scholars and practitioners suggest that learning science might benefit students with learning disabilities (LD) as they “find ways to compensate for their problems by taking advantage of the interactive nature of instructional approaches in science education” (Carlisle & Chang, 1996, p. 20). Thus, science education presents a valuable opportunity to socially include students with LD in mainstream science classrooms, yet it appears to be a missed opportunity in many K-12 settings. Therefore, in this article, we present a critical review of research on intervention practices in science education to support students with LD. Furthermore, we draw on the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) model, which emphasizes multiple means of representation, engagement, and assessment to offer a framework to enrich and differentiate science instruction for diverse learners. Specifically, we embed the UDL framework with inquiry-based practices that have been gleaned from our analysis of the relevant literature. Science inquiry-based approaches that involve students in formulating questions, making and

testing predictions, developing hypotheses, collecting data, and drawing inferences, have shown to improve engagement and learning when compared to lecture-based traditional teaching approaches (Colburn, 2008; Geier et al., 2008; Hmelo-Silver, Duncan, & Chinn, 2007).

However, reports of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) lament the low academic achievement of students in science in North America. These documents indicate that students with disabilities—including those with LD—in elementary and secondary grades are lagging behind in science as evidenced by their significantly lower academic scores compared to their typically achieving peers (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005). Indeed, the persistently perplexing performance of students with LD might indicate that—contrary to the vision of science education programs and policies—science is not accessible to *all* students. Surprisingly, despite significant advancements in research and movements towards inclusion of students with LD in science classrooms, recent studies have shown that stereotypes towards these students remain persistent among their teachers and peers. For example, science teachers tend to have lower academic expectations, and negative perceptions of them, due to the “LD label” that is often imprinted on them. Approximately 56% of science teachers acknowledged that they use disability of students as an excuse for explaining the students’ failure and around 79% of teachers reported the need for special training to overcome prejudices and emotional barriers while working with students with disabilities (Norman, Caseau, & Stefanich, 1998). Moreover, in the wake of increasing numbers of students with LD in their classrooms, Canadian teachers have also reported their incessant challenges and struggles to support diverse learners in science (Caron, 2010; CBC News, 2010).

In addition, research suggests that typically achieving peers tend to have highly negative attitudes towards students with disabilities (Houck, Asselin, Troutman, & Arrington, 1992; May & Stone, 2010; Shapiro & Margolis, 1988). Shapiro and Margolis (1988) observed that both teachers and typically achieving peers perceived students with LD as “dumb, lazy, spoiled, and hopeless” (p. 133). Recently, May and Stone (2010) also reported that typically achieving students regarded their peers with LD as not intelligent and lacking abilities to succeed academically. Because of the low acceptance level by their typically achieving peers and teachers, students with LD feel alienated from their classroom community and are more likely to develop low academic self-concept (Pijl & Frostad, 2010), lower academic self-efficacy, higher levels of anxiety (Hampton & Mason, 2003), and higher levels of loneliness and negative moods (Lackaye & Margalit, 2006). From a cognitive perspective, students with LD exhibit particular difficulties in retrieving prior knowledge, making observations, generating

hypotheses, making predictions, and applying constructed knowledge to new contexts as compared to their typically achieving peers (Mastropieri, Scruggs, Boon, & Carter, 2001; Mastropieri, Scruggs, & Butcher, 1997; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 1994). Clearly, due to these innumerable barriers, science may not be easily accessible to students with LD as compared to their typically achieving peers.

While students with LD have gained physical access to the general education classrooms, concerns about gaining access to the curriculum in the “inclusive” classrooms have been raised by several scholars and practitioners in the field (Edyburn, 2010). The ultimate task of enabling inclusion of students with LD in science classrooms seems to fall mainly in the hands of inexperienced instructors who lack a deeper understanding and knowledge of the characteristics of diverse learners (Norman, Caseau, & Stenafich 1998; Scruggs, Brigham, & Mastropieri, 2013). Therefore, it is critical that educators develop insightful understanding of inclusion and associated practices to offer meaningful learning opportunities to all students to develop a sophisticated understanding of science and its applications in everyday life.

Contrasted with the term “integration,” which refers to a fixed state of homogeneity limited to granting access to the physical environment of classroom, “inclusion” is more complex and dynamic as it involves listening to hidden and unfamiliar voices; being open to abilities, ethnicities, and cultures; and empowering all members of the classroom community (Barton, 1998; Blamires, 1999; Edyburn, 2010). More precisely, inclusion involves teaching students with diverse needs in general education classrooms by providing differentiated adaptations and accommodations to facilitate student learning (Idol, 2006; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2000; Voltz, Sims, Nelson, & Bivens, 2005). Students’ academic and social growth are supported by enacting differentiated curricula, teaching/learning practices, and assessment strategies that are flexible, open, intellectually stimulating, and equitable to meet the multiple and unique needs of each learner (Rose, 2000; Rose & Meyer, 2002).

Conceptual Model for Inclusion: Universal Design for Learning

Coined from the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990, which focused on modifying the physical environment and architecture in public and private spaces for more accessibility to individuals with disabilities (e.g., increased elevator accessibility), the Universal Design for Learning highlights the “architecture of instruction” in curriculum

design (Kameenui & Simmons, 1999). This approach emphasizes cognitive access to students with disabilities where curriculum materials are constructed and restructured to differentiate instruction in response to the needs of diverse learners. Building on these perspectives, the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST, 2011) was the first to postulate the term “Universal Design for Learning,” which is grounded in cognitive neuroscience research (Rose, 2000; Rose & Meyer, 2002).

The UDL model is based on three networks in our brains: recognition, strategic, and affective. Located in the posterior half of the brain’s cortex, the recognition network is involved in making sense of and recognizing patterns in our daily lives (Rose, Harbour, Johnston, Daley, & Abarbanell, 2006). For example, the patterns of falling leaves might indicate change in seasons. Pattern recognition is constructed through a multitude of stimuli, namely visual, auditory, tactile, and olfactory. Impairment of the recognition network renders pattern recognition very challenging—for example, individuals with dyslexia experience difficulties in recognizing patterns in written words (Bruck, 1990; O’Brien, Wolf, Miller, Lovett, & Morris, 2011; Rose et al., 2006). Equally important, the anterior part of the brain (the frontal lobes) comprises the strategic network which deal with executive functioning that enables individuals to plan, organize, and execute actions. Deficits in these areas of the brain affect an individual’s ability to plan and execute multiple tasks, which are particularly important in inquiry-based learning activities in science education. The affective component of the brain is located within the limbic system, which is responsible for our emotions and affects the ways in which we perceive our world. As discussed by Rose et al. (2006), “damage to the affective networks can impair the ability to establish priorities, select what we value or want, focus attention, or prioritize actions” (p. 139).

The UDL approach attempts to compensate for cognitive deficits and capitalize on cultural and social strengths of diverse learners in their construction of scientific knowledge. In particular, three main principles of UDL—*multiple ways of representation*, *engagement*, and *expression*—have been emphasized to support students in their cognitive development (Rose, 2000; Rose & Meyer, 2002; Rose et al., 2006). The UDL model encourages inclusion of all individuals by allowing for multiple instructional and assessment practices to scaffold active knowledge construction through multiple means. In addition, these UDL principles seem to capitalize on strengths of students with LD rather than focusing on their cognitive deficits. Using this approach, teachers could construct equitable and inclusive learning environments for individuals with disabilities where they feel safe to engage in learning instead of feeling segregated and stigmatized. These inclusive practices might also support diverse students in developing their self-confidence while communicating their ideas on science with

their teachers and peers. Below, we present the main principles and specific practices of UDL.

Multiple Means of Representation

There is no one way to “teach students how to work with information, including finding, creating, using, and organizing information” (Rose et al., 2006, p. 137). The UDL design stresses the importance of: (a) providing different options for perceiving and making sense of information (e.g., options that provide information through auditory, visual, and tactile modes); (b) providing differentiated options to support comprehension (e.g., options for decoding text, mathematical notations, and symbols); and (c) providing options to support conceptual understanding (e.g., options that can activate prior knowledge and to enable students to find patterns and build relationship among concepts) (CAST, 2011). Multiple means of representation are thus key to develop a meaningful understanding of scientific concepts by students.

Multiple Means of Engagement

The UDL approach also encourages educators to employ multiple means of engagement to: (a) trigger and sustain interest (e.g., engaging students in active learning experiences and providing options to minimize distractions); (b) maintain effort and persistence through cooperative learning (e.g., designing peer-based activities to foster collaboration and communication); and (c) encourage self-regulation (e.g., different types of self-assessments, reflections, learning and coping strategies) (CAST, 2011).

As also highlighted by Rose et al., (2006), not all students are motivated by similar extrinsic rewards, such as academic scores and grades. To deepen students’ understanding of science concepts and their application to daily lives, multiple forms of engagement should be designed to motivate students to learn science, which could span inquiry-based learning experiences, cooperative learning, and case studies to encourage critical thinking and reflections. Through inquiry-driven activities, teachers can employ several alternative strategies to motivate diverse students to ask questions, conduct observations, test their predictions, construct hypotheses to explain natural phenomena, and communicate those ideas to others. While teachers play a key role in students’ learning, collaborative actions in different inquiry-based activities among peers also lead to meaningful construction of scientific knowledge. Viewed as a community, students and teachers work together, exchange ideas, and learn from one another through the mediation of language, community, culture of speech, and

practical activity which lead to multiple ways of making sense of scientific concepts during inquiry. In the inquiry-based classroom community, activities can be planned by teachers with emphasis on collaboration and social interaction to enact numerous possibilities for students to explore, construct, negotiate, and share their ideas.

Multiple Means of Expression

To offer students with opportunities to demonstrate their learning and understanding of concepts, teachers might employ multiple means of expression using a variety of creative ways to elicit and track students' emerging understandings. To this end, the UDL guiding principles recommend different types of assessments involving: (a) physical actions (e.g., employing multiple methods for response and navigation by using manipulatives, such as keyboards, or joysticks, etc.); (b) creative expressions and communication (e.g., offering multiple tools, such as text, videos, poetry, role-play, dance for construction and communication of knowledge); and (c) executive functions (e.g., providing structured and differentiated supports, such as graphic organizers and templates for setting goals, planning, and strategy development) (CAST, 2011).

Rich and creative inquiry-based activities in science provide students with numerous opportunities for expression. In terms of physical actions, they manipulate various tools to make sense of science concepts—for example, to comprehend the properties of solids, liquids, and gases, students can use blocks, clay, oil, water, syringes, balloons, and so forth. Students can communicate their understanding of the properties of these different states of matter through drawings, argumentations, and movement to imitate the motions of atoms and molecules within each state of matter. In terms of executive functions, students can plan, execute, and conduct experiments where teachers can use differentiated supports, such as inquiry-design protocols to scaffold their inquiry process. Through collaborative inquiries, students are given opportunities to stop, think, and assess the differentiated procedures to conduct experiments through discussions with their peers.

From Theory to Research: Using the UDL Framework to Examine Intervention-Based Research Strategies for Inclusion of Science Students with LD

In this section, we examine intervention-based research studies with students with LD in science classrooms to develop a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of these practices in favouring inclusion. By drawing from the above-discussed multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression, we discuss a few pertinent studies that examined the impact of differentiated instructional strategies on the learning, achievement, and engagement of students with LD.

Inquiry-Based Activities for Inclusion of Students with LD

Various studies have examined the impact of inquiry-driven teaching approaches on academic achievement and attitudes of students with LD towards learning (Bay, Staver, Bryan, & Hale, 1992; Cawley, Hayden, Cade, & Baker-Kroczyński, 2002; Mastropieri et al., 1998; Mastropieri et al., 1997; Mastropieri et al., 2001; McCarthy, 2005; McCleery & Tindal, 1999; Scruggs, Mastropieri, Bakken, & Brigham, 1993). Most of these studies have also compared the merits of inquiry-based teaching to direct instruction, which entails direct transmission of knowledge from the teacher to students with little to no exploration on the part of students. Direct instruction, synonymous to a “one-size-fits-all” instructional approach, fails to take into account diverse abilities in the classroom community, and has shown to have adverse effects on students’ motivation and engagement in science (Osborne & Collins, 2000; Osborne, Simon, & Collins, 2003).

Hands-on practices, on the other hand, de-emphasize excessive dependence on textbooks, favour learning through multi-sensory modes, and are beneficial for students who face difficulties in reading and workbook assignments (Scruggs et al., 1993). In addition, students experiencing challenges in observing, reasoning, processing, retaining information, and critical thinking—essential skills in daily life and at work—can develop these skills through active engagement in inquiry-driven science activities (Adelman & Vogel, 1990; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 1992). Moreover, inquiry-based learning situations and experiences might lead to sustained attention, which would be promising for students with attention-deficit issues. Inquiry-driven approaches may also enhance meaningful science learning by drawing connections between students’ lives and scientific models (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 1998).

McCarthy (2005) conducted a study to compare the performance of students with disabilities in inquiry-based and direct instruction programs. In this study, students who participated in inquiry-oriented activities demonstrated higher improvements in academic scores as compared to those who received instruction directly from the teacher. To construct their understanding about physical and chemical changes in matter, students were asked to bake a cake. By combining several ingredients, students observed physical and chemical changes during the baking process of the cake. Such an approach allowed students to experience learning in various multi-sensory fashions rather than listening to lectures and observing teacher's demonstrations. In addition to multiple means of representation and engagement, students were offered different modes of expression to demonstrate their knowledge through hands-on tasks, multiple-choice items, and questions that required short and long answers. In this study, the differentiated supports and activities provided multisensory, and multiple forms of, representation, engagement, and expression, which allowed the students to capitalize on their strengths, rather than focusing on their disabilities. As previously established by Bay and colleagues (1992), when students with disabilities were exposed to inquiry-based constructivist learning approaches and multiple ways of assessments (hands on as well as text based), they outperformed their typically achieving peers. This evidence points to the benefits of the UDL approach to enact an environment that is supportive and conducive to meaningful learning of science.

In another study, Scruggs and collaborators (1993) compared the academic outcomes and motivation levels associated with an inquiry-based approach to a teacher-directed approach in their work with high school students with LD. Specifically, the study focused on physical and earth science concepts (magnetism and electricity; soil and minerals). Among the various activities, students were engaged in the construction of circuits using motors and d-cells; they also constructed switches to control the flow of electricity. Other activities involved learning about how the strength of an electromagnet can be increased by increasing the number of coils wrapped around the magnet. While this study has drawn on multiple means of representation and engagement to promote learning for students with LD, only a single means of expression—oral interrogation—was employed to assess students' learning. Similar to this study, other studies (see Mastropieri et al., 2001) have employed only a single method of assessment to examine students' understanding of science concepts, whereas for representation and engagement, multiple activities were employed. In these studies (Scruggs et al., 1993; Mastropieri et al., 2001), the academic scores of students with disabilities were significantly lower than their typically achieving peers. Perhaps, if multiple and diverse choices are offered to students with LD to demonstrate what they had learned, they might have felt more confident to express their conceptual comprehension.

While inquiry-based activities certainly benefit students with LD because of the multiple ways of representing science learning, other strategies have also been investigated to address the learning issues that students with LD continuously face in their science classrooms.

Differentiated Curriculum Enhancements: Mnemonics and Graphic Organizers

Students with LD who experience verbal memory deficits, difficulties in recalling scientific vocabulary, reading comprehension, identifying main ideas and key elements, and encounter problems in organizing information into more coherent units, might benefit from differentiated curriculum enhancements, such as mnemonics and graphic organizers. As emphasized by several studies, mnemonic strategies permit ways in which students can encode constructed knowledge that can be retrieved during testing (Levin, 1983; Mastropieri, Scruggs, & Levin, 1985; Mastropieri, Scruggs, & Levin, 1987; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2000). As Scruggs and Mastropieri (2000) explain, the importance of memory for retrieving prior knowledge during the construction of new scientific knowledge and teaching students how and what to remember is crucial. Various researchers argue the merits of mnemonic devices—often pictures and visual images, such as pictorial mnemonics or keywords—in learning extensive scientific vocabulary by transforming words into more meaningful representations (King-Sears, Mercer, & Sindelar, 1992; Mastropieri, Scruggs, & Levin, 1985; Mastropieri, Scruggs, & Levin, 1986). For example, in biology, students need to learn new vocabulary terms, such as *ranidae*, the scientific term for common frogs. Scruggs and Mastropieri (2000) suggest using the keyword “rain” and showing a picture of frogs in the rain. Students can be asked specific questions to construct their understanding about frogs and rain, and then associate the scientific term *ranidae* to frogs.

In addition to mnemonics, graphic organizers provide an alternative format to help students with LD understand science texts. Graphic organizers effectively allow students to make sense of unfamiliar content, abstract concepts, and vocabulary acquisition—especially for students with LD experiencing major challenges in reading and comprehending texts (Bos & Vaughn, 2002; Dexter, Park, & Hughes, 2011; Hughes, Maccini, & Gagnon, 2003; Ives & Hoy, 2003; Kim, Vaughn, Wanzek, & Wei, 2004; Nesbit & Adesope, 2007; Rivera & Smith, 1997). With visual and spatial displays, graphic organizers facilitate the construction of relationship between related concepts and facts. In this way, not only are abstract concepts represented more concretely, but understanding and retention of new concepts is also facilitated (Ausubel, 1968; Dexter & Hughes, 2011; Gajria, Jitendra, Sood, & Sacks, 2007; Hughes et al., 2003; Kim et al., 2004; Mayer, 1979).

Despite the effectiveness of these organizational tools in a number of studies, other researchers did not demonstrate that mnemonics and graphic organizers improve learning for students with disabilities (see Dexter et al., 2011). It is only reasonable to assume that these techniques might not be sufficient to address the academic needs of *all* students. As stipulated by UDL principles, to instill inclusive instructional practices in K-16 classrooms, multiple means of representation need to be employed, which take into account students' diverse cognitive abilities and present learning materials through various stimuli—tactile and auditory—in addition to visual tools, such as mnemonic devices and graphic organizers.

Multiple Approaches: Combining Peer-Assisted Tutoring and Differentiated Curriculum Enhancements

A sparse number of studies have also investigated the merits of combining several strategies to support students with LD, some of whom are often off-task and have behavioural problems. These few studies have merged differentiated curriculum enhancement materials, such as mnemonics and board games related to science concepts, with collaborative learning strategies (peer-assisted instruction) to create a flexible and inclusive environment for diverse communities of learners (Mastropieri et al., 2006; Simpkins, Mastropieri, & Thomas, 2009). An example is Mastropieri, Scruggs, and Graetz's (2005) study on academic and attitudinal outcomes of high school students with and without LD using peer tutoring with differentiated materials (cue cards with mnemonic-based visual images) in a chemistry lesson. Additionally, student outcomes in the differentiated curriculum were compared to their performance in teacher-directed instruction. In the peer-tutoring condition, students worked in pairs with cue cards that contained questions as well as prompts and elaborate explanations of chemistry concepts. For example, the question, "What is a mole?" is answered as the atomic weight in grams of an element or compound. If a student did not answer the question correctly, a peer-tutor would prompt the student (e.g., your weight in grams is?). If this strategy proved unsuccessful, then the tutor asked the student to think about the word "mole" and then a picture of a mole (the animal) on a scale checking its weight in grams was shown to the student, which is a visual tool to remember the information. Still, even with this strategy, students with LD obtained significantly lower scores on recall and comprehension as compared to their typically achieving peers. However, the authors reported that students' engagement and motivation levels were enhanced during collaborative learning with the differentiated chemistry curriculum.

Our analysis of research-based differentiated interventions in science indicates that although several researchers employed multiple ways of representation and engagement, most studies lacked diversity in their assessment methods to examine students' understanding of science concepts.

From Research to Practice: Application of UDL to Create Inclusive Science Practices

The UDL approach seems promising for engaging students and favouring learning in multiple ways in science. Therefore, we adapted this model to develop an inclusive framework for science teaching and learning for diverse learners—especially those with LD. To this end, we draw from prior studies in science education focusing on students with LD, discussed in the previous section, to include effective practices that might foster learning and engagement of students with LD. Because the UDL model is currently being adopted to guide supportive strategies and programs for students with LD and other diverse learners at a number of colleges and universities in Quebec, our model seeks to inform science instruction and learning in advanced secondary and post-secondary classrooms. Specifically, we have adapted and expanded the UDL framework (CAST, 2011) with inquiry-oriented and problem-based approaches to support student engagement in science, facilitate meaningful scientific literacy, and provide opportunities for multiple means of expression.

While it is crucial to understand the unique learning barriers that students with LD might face due to their cognitive deficits, it is equally important to gauge the alternate conceptions or intuitive ideas that students bring to the classroom to develop effective strategies for a comprehensive understanding of science concepts (Asghar, 2011; Libarkin, Asghar, Crockett, & Sadler, 2011; Hawbaker, Balong, Buckwalter, & Runyon, 2001). Research suggests that children's intuitive ideas constitute localized explanatory models that are fairly resistant to change, particularly through direct and lecture-based instructional methods (Asghar, 2004, 2011; Asghar & Libarkin, 2010; Driver, 1985; Shapiro, 1994; Stead & Osborne, 1980). Therefore, effective science instruction for conceptual change should be oriented towards constructing learning situations where students' existing intuitive or novice cognitive structures are challenged to scaffold them in building new representations of the natural world based on accepted scientific models. For example, children—and many adults—tend to think that air has no mass. In order to address this deeply held intuitive idea, teachers could design inquiry-based activities where students can make predictions about the mass of air and then conduct investigations to test their predictions. Through active engagement in hands-on inquiries and by collecting relevant data about the mass of air, students would observe

and (re)construct their models by reflecting on the new evidence gathered during the inquiry, and alter their representations to conclude that air has mass. Therefore, science teachers need to identify the unique intuitive ideas that students with LD bring to their science classrooms.

Unfortunately, teachers are still struggling to find ways to maximize participation of all learners to construct meaningful scientific knowledge and understanding. The problems faced by teachers might worsen as the number of students with LD is likely to increase in general education classrooms. Therefore, it is crucial for science teachers to transform their practices and employ differentiated tools to enhance engagement and learning. To further support teachers to promote inclusive practices in science classrooms, we draw from the UDL model and science education practices to propose a framework to scaffold cognitive, affective, and social growth of students with LD within an inclusive science classroom.

Using Multisensory Means of Representation in Science Teaching and Learning

Firstly, science educators need to focus on multisensory means to present big ideas in science. Equally essential is to select key foundational concepts that are relevant to the big ideas from the science curriculum (Hawbaker et al., 2001). Big ideas are “major organizing principles” and concepts that have rich explanatory and predictive power, and are applicable to many situations and contexts (Carnine, Dixon, & Silbert, 1998). Big ideas are important because all individuals, irrespective of their abilities, beliefs, and ethnicity, need to draw on them in their daily lives, while attempting to make sense of the natural world (AAAS, 1993; Achieve Inc., 2013; CMEC, 1997; MELS, 2007).

To create an inclusive environment that meets the individual academic needs of all learners, students should be encouraged to make mistakes and learn from their failure as “real” scientists do in their practice. In order to support students with LD, teachers must enact safe and supportive learning environments that allow all science students to participate freely without the fear of being judged by their teachers and peers. Using multiple means of representation, science teachers can engage their students to experience and learn about the natural world in multisensory ways. For example, the following strategies and tools could be used to differentiate the science curriculum and teaching/learning practices.

Tactile. Employ concrete physical materials and manipulatives for demonstrations and student-led inquires (e.g., 3D models, role-play, lab tools).

Visual. Use a variety of visual tools (e.g., graphic organizers), *What I Know*, *what I Want to know*, *what I Learned* (KWL) charts, animations, simulations, videos, interactive presentations.

Auditory. Use auditory stimuli, such as audiotaped presentations, podcasts summarizing key concepts and big ideas.

As conceptual development entails assimilation of new representations and a substantial reorganization of intuitive ideas (accommodation), eliciting and building on students' intuitive models is a significant goal of science learning. Therefore, it is crucial that teachers use multiple means to probe and represent students' intuitive models before and during instruction. For example, students' preconceptions and intuitive ideas can be elicited through drawings, multiple-choice questions, and conversations with students to explore how they have understood taught concepts. Because students with LD might struggle to process and organize information, science educators need to provide extra time to these students to represent their thinking and prior knowledge.

To illustrate the application of this framework to science teaching, we offer a specific example related to the concept of biomolecules as shown in Table 1. Biomolecules are utilized by living organisms and include large macromolecules such as proteins, polysaccharides, lipids, and nucleic acids—for example, glucose is a familiar biomolecule. We selected the concept of biomolecules because it spans across many science courses (e.g., biology, biochemistry, nutrition) in high school to post-secondary education. Through visual representations (e.g., drawing biomolecules and online animations), students might develop a clearer understanding of the differences in the structures of different biomolecules. Some students might prefer a more tactile approach such as role-playing rather than drawing. In this case, teachers might assign students to take the roles of carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen atoms and ask them to model the structure of a biomolecule, such as glucose in its linear and cyclic form. Moreover, by using play dough and other art-based supplies, students can construct and compare 3-D structures of different biomolecules, allowing them to better visualize the positioning of atoms and types of bonding between different biomolecules.

Using Multisensory Means of Engagement in Science Learning Experiences

Providing various options to encourage active engagement and enhance student motivation is also vital while learning science. Designing active learning experiences through hands-on inquiries, reflection on observations, collaboration, and cooperative

learning can engage learners with LD while minimizing distractions. Science teachers could particularly consider the following strategies to provide multisensory means of engagement:

Hands-on and minds-on inquiries. Design inquiries to promote conceptual learning through developing predictions, planning investigations to test predictions, collecting data, and constructing evidence-based explanations to develop a deeper understanding of scientific concepts.

Self-regulation. Support students to establish clear learning goals and develop strategies to monitor their attention, progress, and learning in relation to their own goals.

Self-reflection and assessment. Encourage students to reflect on their learning by using structured protocols or worksheets, writing journals, keeping audio diaries, sharing their understanding of science concepts with peers, and identifying areas for improvement through conversations with teachers.

Altogether, students should be given rich opportunities to challenge their existing constructs—intuitive conceptions or alternate understandings—to facilitate the development of new representations and reconstruction of intuitive ideas. For example, to develop a clear concept of biomolecules, teachers can ask their students to list multiple foods of their choice and ask them whether these foods can be classified mainly as carbohydrates, proteins, or lipids. In groups, students can debate the reasons that led them to classify foods accordingly. Students' preconceptions or alternate conceptions could be elicited through a series of questions, conversations, and constructive argumentation by science teachers. A clear awareness of students' intuitive ideas would help the teachers to guide them in developing their questions for inquiries, predictions, and designing experiments to test them. Students should be encouraged to develop their explanations based on the data obtained through their inquiries. At the same time, teachers need to develop structured assessment strategies and tools to further probe and keep track of their students' emerging models of biomolecules (e.g., worksheets, students' response sheets, multiple assessment items, rubrics, KWL charts, etc.). Using peer-based activities, teachers can encourage the students to work collaboratively to “discover” the different biomolecules in food samples or “unknown solutions” by designing inquiries to test their predictions. In Table 1, we present different means of engagement.

Using Multisensory Means of Expression to Demonstrate Science Learning

While inquiry-based activities engage students in multimodal science learning, a spectrum of assessment strategies—both formative and summative—are crucial to elicit and track students' thinking and emerging understanding. Below, we present some means of expression for students to demonstrate their knowledge and comprehension.

Performance-based assessments in science. Use authentic and real-life problems to encourage students' problem-solving abilities. For example, encourage students to design and conduct inquiries—Independently or with their peers—to test their ideas and explanations.

Diverse assessment tools. Employ a variety of assessments before, during, and after instruction to track students' models and learning trajectories, for example, multiple-choice questions, short essays, worksheets, drawings, poster presentations, and podcasts to share findings/data. Different means of expression such as written work (e.g., journals, reflective diaries, lab reports); oral presentations; case studies and visual means of assessment should be given equal importance and consideration alongside more formal science exams and tests. Focusing on only one type of assessment might be inadequate in conveying a richer and comprehensive understanding of these concepts. Particularly significant for students with LD, multiple forms of expression draw from students' strengths and skills to demonstrate their constructed knowledge as shown in Table 1 for biomolecules. Because the objectives of science education are mainly geared towards developing critical thinking, reasoning, and problem solving—essential life skills—multiple means of expression, such as performance-based assessments and case studies, can be used to assess these skills.

Conclusion

Promoting inclusion by using these multiple modes and means to support diverse students' learning of science might seem a complex and daunting task. As more emphasis is being placed on educating diverse learners in general science classrooms, science educators need to be equipped with ideas, tools, and necessary support to create safe and inclusive spaces for collaborative learning. Thus, it is crucial to integrate such practices in teacher preparation and continuing professional development programs. In this paper, we presented an inclusive science education framework drawn from UDL principles and evidence-based practices in science education for

students with LD to offer some practical ideas and tools to support academic needs of these diverse learners. Further research is required to explore the effectiveness of differentiated means of representation, engagement, and expression to make science accessible to diverse learners.

Table 1
Making Sense of Biomolecules Through Multisensory Means of Representation, Engagement, and Expression

Multisensory Means of Representation	Multisensory Means of Engagement	Multisensory Means of Expression
<p style="text-align: center;">Visual</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking students to draw and make concept maps to articulate their preconceptions or intuitive models of biomolecules • Drawing biomolecules and comparing the differences in their structure. Example: drawing of simple sugars—monosaccharides such as fructose, glucose, and galactose and using different colours to represent carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen molecules • View online animations and simulations • Slides/charts/notes with images and concept maps on differences between biomolecules <p style="text-align: center;">Tactile</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using different materials to construct 3-D models of biomolecules • Role-play to model the structure and bonding • Using play dough and art-based supplies to model bonding in biomolecules 	<p style="text-align: center;">Hands-on and Minds-on Inquiries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking questions to probe students' preconceptions or alternate understandings such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What types of food can be mainly classified as carbohydrates? - What are the reasons or experiences you have used to classify these types of food as carbohydrates? • Conducting inquiries: laboratory sessions focused on conducting experiments to differentiate different biomolecules (proteins and carbohydrates). Chemical tests (e.g., Benedict test) can be used to differentiate between different types of sugars (e.g., monosaccharides and disaccharides) 	<p style="text-align: center;">Diverse Assessment Tools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written: Worksheets, conceptual journals, lab reports, diaries, KWL charts, concept maps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students can write about their favourite biomolecules, explaining the relationship between structure and function. They can also articulate the benefits and adverse effects of different biomolecules on their health • Oral: Oral presentations on concepts involving biomolecules (e.g., poster presentations)

Table 1***Making Sense of Biomolecules Through Multisensory Means of Representation, Engagement, and Expression (cont.)***

Multisensory Means of Representation	Multisensory Means of Engagement	Multisensory Means of Expression
<p style="text-align: center;">Auditory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audio taping discussions in classes on concepts • Developing podcasts on key concepts 	<p style="text-align: center;">Self-Regulation, Self-Reflection, and Self-Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students can set up their own learning goals with teachers' support and reflect on their work and progress in relation to those goals (e.g., using checklists and self-reflective audio-diaries) • Peer-based activities where students are given an unknown solution and tasked to identify the different biomolecules by asking questions, formulating hypotheses, testing, observing, arguing, drawing conclusions • Web-based activities: virtual labs on biomolecules (e.g., http://learn.i.st/learnings/44003-virtual-lab-investigating-biological-compounds) 	<p style="text-align: center;">Performance-Based Assessments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student-led authentic hands-on activities to demonstrate their critical thinking, reasoning, problem solving • Case studies. For example, students can be given a case study on an individual who is anorexic and asked to diagnose and address the problem using their knowledge of biomolecules and nutrition

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Teaching for Change: Teacher Candidates' Anti-Oppression Elementary School Lesson Plans

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores pre-service elementary teacher candidates' written reflections on an assignment for a mandatory Bachelor of Education course in Ontario, Canada. The assignment required the teacher candidates (TCs) to create and teach one 40-minute anti-oppression lesson (racism, sexism, homophobia, etc.) in a public elementary school with students in senior kindergarten to grade 6. Two key themes are discussed in the paper: first, the ways in which TCs found convenient excuses as to why they were unable to fully engage with a topic; and, second, the fears identified by the TCs in terms of teaching sensitive issues.

These children in their own special way taught me that they were not too young, and that no matter the age, topic areas such as homophobia SHOULD be discussed in the classroom without discomfort on anyone's part. — Matilda¹

While Canada is championed for being a “cultural mosaic,” those in the process of becoming teachers, teacher candidates (TCs), certainly in Ontario, most commonly identify as White, female, heterosexual, middle class, Canadian-born with English as their first language. TCs often express a lack of experience with critical discussions about race, gender, sexuality, and nationality, among other socio-cultural topics. This paper draws from a project completed in an initial teacher education program in Ontario, Canada in 2012. The project drew from an assignment in a mandatory socio-cultural course which required elementary (Primary/Junior) TCs² to work together to create and deliver an anti-oppression lesson with

elementary students using racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism, or classism as the underlying theme. This project centralizes TCs' reflections as a method of interrogating experiences with inclusion and socially just perspectives. What follows is an analysis of TCs' reflections on the experience.

Taking a Risk: Deepening an Understanding of Inclusion

As Sleeter and Owuor (2011) premise,

[a] majority of teacher education candidates in the United States come from White, female, heterosexual, middle-class backgrounds, which are increasingly at odds with the backgrounds of students. Although all prospective teachers need preparation to teach diverse students well, the discrepancy between the backgrounds of the majority of pre-service teachers and realities of public schools creates challenges to teacher education programs. (p. 534)

In the initial teacher education program that is the focus of this project, the Canadian demographics are in keeping with Sleeter and Owuor's findings. In 2006, 16.2% of Canadians were visible minorities with only 6.9% of the teaching force visible minorities (Ryan, Pollock, & Antonelli, 2009). While greater diversity in the elementary and secondary student population is evident in some of the larger urban centres and increasingly in the smaller cities and rural areas in which the TCs complete their fieldwork, for the most part, the participants in this project complete their fieldwork in predominantly White settings.

A common presumption expressed by the TCs is that engaging elementary students in anti-oppression work is unnecessary, perhaps "risky," particularly in predominantly White classrooms. Responses from former TCs suggest that anti-oppression work is theoretically sound but not practical or possible to implement in an elementary classroom. Fear of upsetting parents and students is the most often cited explanation for avoiding or restricting anti-oppression work in the classroom. By partnering with a local elementary school and engaging in a project that requires TCs to teach anti-oppression lessons to elementary students, TCs are also being asked to: examine how they are implicated in the reproduction of the status quo; explore the ways in which the power of the dominant group is maintained; and confront their fears.

Questions That Framed the Project

As Nieto (2003) argues, students from the dominant culture need “multicultural education” more so than those from minority groups because they are generally the most miseducated or uneducated about diversity. Lewis (2001) argues, “race matters as much in (almost) all-White settings ... as it does in any multiracial inner city school—perhaps even more so” (p. 804). From this landscape, we draw from Milner’s (2003) assertion that TCs need opportunities to develop instructional methods and tools that allow them to pose tough questions about issues of race (and we include other aspects of social location, namely: socio-economic class, sexual orientation, gender, nationality, ability, age, etc.).

This project was premised on engaging TCs with critical multiculturalism (James, 2005; May, 1999; McLaren, 1995) and, as such, asks the following four questions: first, in what ways are TCs prepared to implement an anti-oppression framework? Second, what are the barriers to implementing anti-oppression work in the classroom? Third, as future educators, will the TCs use their locations as insiders/outsideers to make transparent the barriers that exist in schools? Fourth, will they continue to reproduce the status quo? It is through an assignment designed to specifically press TCs to design and teach an anti-oppression lesson that we delve into the questions that framed this research.

The Assignment: Teaching With Change in Mind

The socio-cultural course is offered during a time when TCs are not on placement in schools, so it can be challenging to make direct and timely theory-practice linkages. The “Teaching With Change in Mind” assignment required the cooperation of an elementary school close enough to the university so the TCs could teach their lesson and return to their classes. In 2011/12 there were 90 TCs enrolled in the course and the partner school provided five classrooms and three days in January 2012 for the lessons which included: an SK-grade 1; grade 2, grade 3/4; grade 4/5 and a grade 5/6 class. The TCs were encouraged to work in groups of five to six. The assignment required TCs to include concrete and specific connections to the Ontario Ministry of Education’s policy document, *Realizing the Promise of Diversity: Ontario’s Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy* (2009), and to carefully consider the grade and subject-specific expectations when designing a 40-minute anti-oppression lesson plan.

At the university the TCs were required to share their lesson plan ideas during an in-class workshop in order to elicit peer and instructor feedback and critique. Next, the plans were formalized and submitted to the instructor who then forwarded them to the host classroom teachers. The host classroom teachers had one month to give

any feedback or raise any concerns (none were raised). Finally, the lessons were taught. Afterwards, the TCs were asked to:

- reflect upon and explore an issue that intrigued them;
- consider areas that made them question their work or doubt what they understood about teaching; and,
- explore what they want to learn more about specifically related to the objectives of the course: social location and human development.

Unpacking the Reflections: Data Collection and Analysis

The TCs' self-reflections are the primary source of data for this project. Tri-council ethics approval was obtained to collect and analyze the TCs' reflections written after the delivery of the anti-oppressive lesson plans. As the course instructor was also the researcher, to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, a marker-grader was hired to assess the reflections. The TCs enrolled in the socio-cultural course were asked to voluntarily share their reflections after the assignment had been assessed and returned to the students. TCs who gave informed consent to participate in the project submitted their reflections to a research assistant who removed direct identifiers from the assignments to protect the identity of the participants. The participants were assigned a parallel cultural pseudonym and the reflections were coded to reflect the participants' workshop topic and the grade level. Of the almost 90 candidates enrolled in the course, 39 participated in the research project (six males and 33 females). Of the 33 females, six self-identified as visible minorities and one female participant self-identified as Aboriginal. All six males self-identified as White. The average age of the students enrolled full-time in the program was 26.86 with a median age of 24. The youngest student was 21 years of age and the oldest was 47 years of age.

Analysis of the data included process coding. The codes reflect the common and various themes that were identified from the data. The data was analyzed using what Tesch (1990) describes as "de-contextualization" to "separate relevant portions of data from their context" (p. 118) in order to identify themes and coding categories and "re-contextualization" or the reassembling of the data to create "pools of meanings" (p. 122) to present a unified and coherent picture. The data was triangulated for reoccurring themes among the participants using the techniques described by Bogdan and Biklen (1998).

Before embarking on a discussion of the findings, the learning environment will be described including some of the issues and challenges that occurred at the beginning of the process.

Preparing the Lessons: Challenges

There were many challenges in terms of the TCs choosing their grade and topic. It was interesting to observe the ways in which some TCs worked to avoid so-called “sensitive topics” (racism and homophobia) as well as the ways in which the same topics (racism and homophobia) were fought over. Overwhelmingly, most TCs wanted either the grade 4/5 class or the grade 6 class and many had to be encouraged to choose the younger grades. None of the groups chose classism as a topic.

Another challenge was working with the TCs to see how issues could be embedded within the lesson. It was very challenging for some TCs to envision a lesson that was not a lecture on the issue but rather presenting a lesson that disrupted the taken-for-granted in schools and within individuals; lessons that taught a math concept, for example, but perhaps exposed classism. Ultimately, most groups opted to connect their lessons with social studies, language arts (media literacy), and/or physical and health education curriculum expectations as a way to legitimize lessons that overtly addressed their particular “ism.”

Findings

As we examined the TCs’ reflections, several themes were identified. For the purposes of this paper, we will elaborate on two key themes: first, the ways in which TCs found “convenient” reasons or excuses to rationalize their level of engagement with the topic(s); and second, the ways in which fear was a debilitating factor.

Convenient excuses. Examining privilege and exposing structural inequities is uncomfortable work at best. As Briskin (1998) argues, “Naming the practices of power can be very unsettling for those who benefit from them, and even for those who do not benefit but have developed a comfortable acceptance of and familiarity with them” (p. 27). Compounding critical discussions around identity is the tendency for neophyte teachers to focus on *their* experiences rather than shifting the focus to the experiences of the students (Anderson & Stillman, 2010). As such, it was difficult for the TCs to see the larger picture, a positionality that is revealed in the data. For example, one prominent theme that may also be attributed to the position of teacher-as-student is navigating

aspects of teaching that were deemed by the TCs to be out of their control, which became reasons to justify not engaging in-depth with the subject matter. These included: first, unfamiliarity with the classroom and not knowing the students in advance or what we have termed “teaching to the ‘unknown’”; and, second, underestimating the elementary students’ background knowledge and ability to engage with the material. While these might be common concerns for any TC, the concerns were possibly heightened by the TCs’ discomfort with the subject matter. Aspects deemed to be out of the TCs’ control were sometimes used to justify and explain why the participants were unable to fully engage with a topic. These two subcategories of convenient excuses will now be discussed in greater detail.

Teaching to the “unknown”. In the TCs’ reflections several participants expressed concerns about not knowing the elementary students in advance. It would have been preferable for the TCs to meet and interact with the students and the teacher in advance, perhaps on more than one occasion, but the assignment was created to work within the existing parameters of the overall program. Statements such as, “I was not aware of the dynamics of the classroom and the developmental level of the children which created some initial discomfort” [Marianne, Sexism, SK/1] or “I felt uncomfortable planning for a class I had never met before” [Niki, Genderism, 3/4] were common. Sometimes the reflections were indicative of the TCs’ lack of experience with the children: “Not knowing the students was a bit difficult at times, as there was no way to predict or anticipate what they might say” [Susan, Genderism, 2].

While this assignment was designed to explore issues of social location, it was also designed to give real-time experience with children at various developmental stages, which required anticipating how students at various ages and stages might respond to different issues, and to take into consideration what would be developmentally appropriate to discuss, and how to structure those conversations and activities. However, the suggestion that greater comfort or established rapport with the children might have increased the depth of discussion is an important point, well articulated by Sienna who writes, “The students would have felt more comfortable with us if they had been able to spend more time getting to know us and realizing that they will not be judged by their opinions and contributions” [Racism, 6].

Finding ways to have the TCs meet and interact with the students in advance would be a desirable future addition to the assignment and the course. Some participants indicated they were not certain about the demographics of the students in advance of their lessons, which caused them some concern. For example, Sheila commented that

she, "Did not want the workshop to be in a class where there was only one student who was 'African-American'; I did not want them to be singled out" [Racism, 6]. In addition, Heleen wrote, "Overall, I was quite comfortable presenting, but this may have changed if I was presenting to a larger, more diverse group" [Racism, 2].

The comments reveal both a consciousness to be protective of students who might be in the minority and also a fear of engaging in a discussion about racism in the presence of individuals who might have actually experienced it, as in Heleen's response. The TCs' comments are reflective of Milner's (2010) assertion, "if I acknowledge the racial or ethnic background of my students or myself, then I may be considered racist" (p. 121). Rather than viewing the students as individuals who might benefit from a conversation about "Othering" and recognizing the need to explicitly identify and acknowledge racial and ethnic backgrounds, there is a perception that the discussion should be minimized in the presence of visible minority students. Recognizing that race matters and impacts the daily lives of those positioned as "Other" is a difficult shift to make for those TCs who have benefited from and not examined their privileged racial position. The impression that overtly addressing race will be controversial combined with a desire to avoid and deflect controversy, runs the risk of keeping whiteness at the center of the lessons (Thompson, 2003). Next, we will explore the second subcategory of convenient excuses, underestimating the knowledge base of the students.

Underestimating the understanding of elementary students. Perhaps predictably, several of the participants wrote specifically about how much they underestimated what the students would know. As Susan commented, "One of the first things I realized during the presentation was that these kids (and kids in general I'm sure) had much more knowledge than I expected them to have" [Genderism, 3/4].

Mila wrote, "I believe the workshop showed me that students are never too young to explore delicate issues, and have the ability to provide quite candid insight" [Sexism, SK/1]. As well, Sally commented, "This workshop has given me the opportunity to see how students, even at a young age, are aware and interested in topics that are usually swept under the rug" [Genderism, 2].

The opportunity to present lessons on topics classroom teachers might determine to be too sensitive for young students has the potential to both disrupt seasoned teachers' thinking as well as demonstrate to new teachers the capabilities and experiences of the young learners in the classroom, as revealed in this comment by John,

I found it troubling at times to see how deeply rooted in negativity these second grade students already were. . . I learned that children are often deeply embedded in their social locations and upbringings and therefore, even at the tender age of 7 and 8, may already have strong opinions and beliefs on topics such as homosexuality. [Homophobia, 2]

Resistance to anti-oppression work in schools can impede neophyte and aspiring teachers' development of critical multicultural skills and sensitivity and, subsequently, their willingness to participate in equity and culturally relevant education practices (Brown, 2004). Many TCs have a preconceived notion that education is somehow "neutral" and that controversial topics or issues should be ignored or downplayed, a conception that is not disrupted, but rather reinforced by classroom teachers who remark that they do not want to incite parents and wish for harmony as opposed to discord. The TCs' reflections reveal unexamined assumptions held by some classroom teachers regarding what children should know. In this way, classroom teachers may be acting as gatekeepers, operating on the assumption that the students in their classes, the students' families, and/or their friends have not experienced, participated in, or been exposed to larger societal issues such as sexism, racism, classism, ableism, and heterosexism, reinforcing a faulty assumption that learning and classrooms are neutral spaces.

In the next section we will explore the second key theme: the ways in which fear undermined the implementation of the lesson plans.

Fears

"The lesson wasn't necessarily playing it safe but it also wasn't pushing the envelope."
[Macy]

This next section will delve into ways in which many TCs described the preparation and implementation of the anti-oppression lessons as an uncomfortable experience that mobilized some and debilitated others. Several TCs expressed uncertainty in terms of how much "depth" was appropriate for their topic and the grade level, which was one of the tasks of the assignment: making specific and concrete linkages to child development. The comments by Conan reveal the multiple concerns and issues that were confronted by some participants. He writes,

When I first looked at the grades and topics I wanted an older grade, assuming the students would be able to cope with the concepts more easily. I also wanted the

least touchiest topic from a social political angle. I was extremely worried about backlash from students or parents that would not agree with the lesson approach we take. I was also worried that being a White male and discussing these topics also would open me up to criticism. [Conan, Racism, SK/1]

Conan's reflection reveals the multitude of issues that were of concern: the age of the students, desensitizing the topic, and fear of parental backlash. In addition, Conan's own positionality as a White male with privilege was an area of concern for him. The quote exemplifies themes found in the data, which we will now explore under three subcategories. First, many participants experienced difficulty finding the "right" language that was age appropriate, not contentious, and at the same time professional. Second, some TCs expressed anxiety regarding what they deemed "uncomfortable areas" for discussion and expressed fear in terms of upsetting students, parents, teachers, and even their own colleagues and, as such, participants made conscious decisions to "soften" their topic. Third, in some cases, the TCs' own positionality (as a male, as a White teacher, etc.) made them more conscious of their language and word choices and may have impeded or deepened their connection with the topics and lessons. We begin with a discussion regarding language and terminology.

Finding the "right" language. Many of the TCs described discomfort with using particular terms, such as: racism, sexism, and homosexuality. As Leah commented, "I didn't feel comfortable introducing such controversial words to children, especially if they have never heard them before" [Homophobia, 3/4].

Recognizing their role as "guests" in the host classroom and their location as "student teachers," those who reflected on this aspect of discomfort also tended to provide the classroom teacher with the final decision of whether to use a term or not as evidenced in this reflection, "We asked the teacher if we could use the word sexism in our lesson. She explained to us that she found it unnecessary to say and a little inappropriate so just explain it without the word" [Marianne, Sexism, SK/1].

It is interesting that the TCs asked the host teacher permission to use the term sexism, suggesting they were uncomfortable and possibly wanted a reason not to use the terminology in the lesson. While some TCs describe the response of many host classroom teachers as "cautious," their reflections also reveal that they requested permission on the day the lesson was taught and were denied. The host teachers were provided with the lesson plans in advance so they could raise any concerns. The instructor was not contacted by any of the host teachers before or after the lesson plans were taught.

In the end, many TCs avoided language that might be contentious or avoided specific vocabulary with the students. The TCs' accounts suggest that some seasoned teachers were uncomfortable with anti-oppression language and the potential impact and possible negative reaction to the words by students and parents: "[The classroom teacher] mentioned to me that the students had NEVER heard that term [sexism] before and would rather us not say it directly for fear of parental phone calls the next day" [Nicola, Sexism, SK/1].

And yet, as Marianne wrote, "As a teacher candidate I was very shocked with the intellectual comments and use of adult awareness that the children used involving sexism. [Sexism, SK/1]. Marianne's reflection reveals a disconnect between the classroom teacher's perception of the students' understanding and their actual capabilities as well as a fear of overtly naming or labelling oppression.

Not only was it found that teachers were uncomfortable with certain words used in their classrooms, but some classroom teachers were also anxious about the lessons: "One piece of knowledge that really made me stop in my tracks was a comment that the classroom teacher made, she mentioned that she was very worried about the presentation and hoped that everything would go 'smoothly'" [Nicola, Sexism, SK/1].

The desire for the lesson to go smoothly seems to be equated with a "successful" lesson with the exception of this reflection, "I am a little ashamed to say that I was hoping at least one homophobic student would blurt out 'faggot' just to get the ball rolling, no matter how disruptive" [Jansen, Homophobia, 3/4]. The majority of participants expressed a desire for the topics to be taught without controversy. Some even expressed overt fear that saying the wrong thing could result in expulsion from the B.Ed program:

I was worried...if we were to discuss a topic or say something that is misinterpreted as racist or politically incorrect we could get kicked out of the program. So going into this project I was extremely nervous and uncomfortable...I had a tremendous amount of fear because we did not get an older grade and we got a very controversial topic. [Conan, Racism, SK/1]

Conan's response indicates the blurring of boundaries between being a university student who is encouraged to delve into difficult subject matter and perceived constraints by governing bodies such as the Ontario College of Teachers, which might result in disciplinary measures for "conduct unbecoming of a teacher." Discussing race and being racist are crucial issues that need to be unpacked at an early point not only

in teacher education programs, but also throughout students' educational careers. Conan's response is reflective of Milner's (2010) second assertion regarding colour-blindness that,

If I admit that people experience the world differently and that race is an important dimension of people's experiences, I may be seen as "politically incorrect." I may offend others in the teacher education classroom discourse if I express my beliefs and reservations about race. (p.21)

When TCs and teachers constrain, censor, and silence themselves, so-called sensitive topics are rarely discussed in classrooms, leaving additional generations without the language and knowledge of oppressive acts and actions. Conan's comment that a statement might be "misinterpreted" as racist negates the oppression by omission that occurs in schools on a daily basis. The assignment specifically required the students to make reference and connection to the Ministry Equity policy document (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009) as well as the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in a proactive attempt to disrupt some of the anticipated fears. Integrating the Ministry document was a tactic included to give TCs "permission" to engage in difficult discussions with students, a tactic that was not always successful (quite possibly because of the vagueness of language used within the Equity document itself) as evidenced by Conan's reflection above as well as Nicola and Marianne's request to the host teacher for permission to use the term sexism.

Conan's response also illuminates another fear common to TCs: the trepidation of being monitored or surveilled by the classroom teacher as Macy describes:

The main reason for my discomfort was actually because the classroom teacher was present during our presentation... I feel as though lessons are always more nerve-racking when the classroom teacher is present, as they are the ones who can truly judge the material you are presenting. [Homophobia, 4/5]

At one point during Macy's group presentation, the following situation occurred,

A girl ... asked us, "If a boy and boy are married, they can't have a child, they can only adopt one, but what if a girl and a girl get married? Can they have a baby?" I felt so uncomfortable during this question because I was worried about how [the classroom teacher] might take our response, she is the classroom teacher after all and we were simply guests. [Homophobia, 4/5]

The TCs, as students, are perpetually being marked and graded on the work they do (even though the TCs were not evaluated on the teaching of the anti-oppression lessons) and feel they are being “judged” in this case by the classroom teacher who is viewed as an “expert.” As a result, TCs who should be in a unique position to take greater risks instead play it safe for fear of offending anyone. As Nicola asked, “Will the teacher be upset if she doesn’t agree with our definition and/or centers?” [Sexism, SK/1].

While TCs felt limited in some ways in terms of their positions as “students” and “guests,” their positionality also has the potential to produce an environment for taking greater risks, if, and when, the conditions are optimal. It is an interesting juxtaposition: on the one hand the classroom teachers are viewed as “expert” and yet, on the other hand, anti-oppression lessons and discussions are not common place in most elementary classrooms, hence the impetus for this course assignment.

Many TCs indicated during class discussions that they did not have anti-oppression learning in elementary, secondary school, or even university, leaving them at a loss as to how to begin conversations without knowledge as to what could be deemed “appropriate” language as evidenced by this reflection,

Being in a grade six classroom I felt unaware of the boundaries surrounding racism-associated terminology. Should I be using words like slavery, murder, bombings, hangings, or Ku Klux Klan? Or should I skip the graphic details of our North American history and begin with the fight for equality, teaching about the Underground Railroad, Martin Luther King, and Rosa Parks? [Lacy, Racism, 6]

The TC’s concern reveals a dichotomous understanding of racism as viewed through an American perspective, revealing gaps in a Canadian contextual understanding of oppression as well as gaps in terms of deeper understandings of systemic racism and contemporary issues. This understanding of racism may in fact be indicative of two of Milner’s (2010) assertions regarding colour blindness, namely, that exploring race as an important dimension of people’s experiences may offend others and secondly, the erroneous assertion that racism has ended. As Lewis (2001) has also documented, there seems to be both a refusal and a lack of knowledge in terms of the TCs’ ability to discuss so-called “sensitive” issues with mostly White children. Also evidenced in Lacy’s reflection is a suggestion that there is a positive and negative way to address racism, which leads into our next subcategory of fear, the ways in which TCs worked to soften their topics.

Softening the topics. A recurring theme described by many TCs was a position that their lesson was safe from any real controversy, and therefore an easy way to address the topic. Some participants suggested they purposely chose a topic they felt was “less controversial,” such as ableism, or altered their topics to “social bullying” or “positive friendships.” As Stacie noted, “We chose a topic that was very easy to discuss and left a lot of room for interpretation” [Positive Friendships, SK/1].

Stacie went on to comment that she “still feels conflicted about introducing very young children to the horrors of oppression.” It is interesting to note the language used by the participants to discuss oppression, such as “horrors,” which gives insight into their rationale for softening the topic. In addition, the presumption that the TC can somehow protect students from the “horrors” of oppression suggests that the TC does not expect very young children would have experienced any form of oppression. Language that illuminates participants’ perceptions can also be detected in this excerpt: “As I reflect on the experience of teaching in the anti-oppression workshop, I realize that I stayed within my comfort zone throughout the lesson by not approaching the ugly side, or the depth of racism” [Charles, Racism, SK-1].

Charles’ comments about the “ugly side” of racism suggests there exists a corollary “beautiful” or “pretty” side of racism and therefore there must be a “nice” way to present the information or have a discussion. Again, the idea of protecting children from something “ugly” is a motivating factor to rationalize not teaching about difficult subject matter. Fear of discomfort motivates TCs to “play it safe,” as opposed to being seen as a necessary element for overcoming challenges and preconceptions. As Lewis (2001) argues, struggle may be the necessary element for change to occur.

TCs also noted greater impact may have occurred if the TCs had gone into more depth. As Charles comments,

I think that fact that we were teaching for a SK/Grade 1 class was an easy excuse to treat the subject in an easy and uncomplicated way . . . I think that I was simply more comfortable approaching the issue by having a positive message that we should treat people the same regardless of skin colour. [Charles, Racism, SK-1]

Assuming that discussions about race might be “uncomplicated,” compounded with the statement that we should “treat people the same,” is evidence of a colour-blind stance (Lewis, 2001; Banks & Banks, 2007; Milner, 2010) that serves to undermine and dismiss the experiences of racialized individuals who are not “all treated the same” and reinforces the privileged position of White people in our society.

As Kose and Lim (2010) suggest, perhaps the TCs recognized the “easier” or “softer” introduction to the topic was at the cost of the educational value for the students. In contrast, Sarah, whose group opted to soften their topic to “positive friendships,” wrote the following after her experience,

I learned that there are no concrete answers that will guarantee that you will not offend the children or their parents. However, there are ways of teaching respect and opening a dialogue that encourages children to feel they can talk openly. [Positive Friendships, SK/1]

In Sarah’s reflection there appears to be a shift from a focus on herself to a focus on the learners and the larger community and the ways in which dialogue can be created, not shut down. Next, we will explore the third subcategory of fear, the participants’ own positionality and the ways in which the TCs’ social location may have impeded the teaching of their lesson plans.

Participants’ positionality. Only a few TCs described their initial discomfort with the lesson plans in terms of their own social location, offering deep insights and revealing their own lack of anti-oppression education or their lack of experience as recipients of oppression, as revealed in this statement: “I suppose I felt a degree of discomfort during the preparation of the lesson, because as a Caucasian, I didn’t know how to appropriately address the topic of racism” [Maggie, Racism, 6].

As Milner (2010) argues, in order for new teachers to better understand their positionality in classrooms, they need to build cultural competence. The participants’ connection to the coursework and readings also percolated through their reflections, as Maggie continues to elaborate upon with regard to her positionality as a White woman. She states, “[Being White] also hindered my comfort because I thought about some of the “White privileges” I shared with McIntosh [referring to McIntosh (1990) article read in class], and I began to wonder if I was a suitable presenter for the topic.”

Engaging in discussions about race from a privileged position requires an examination of how one is implicated in the current conditions and moving beyond constructions of guilt to a position of action and a dialogue.

Gaps

There were some noticeable gaps in the participants’ reflections. Part of the goal of the course and the assignment was to press the development of the TCs to be critical pedagogues. We anticipated some critical reflection on the curriculum documents

or a discussion of the ways in which the diversity policy might be used to greater effect, which did not occur. In some ways, we felt the TCs' reflections lacked a critical interrogation of the experience; the TCs were completing an assignment to meet the course requirements and in doing so continued to play it safe in their responses. As well, while TCs mentioned race and their positionality as White TCs, those who were visible minorities did not mention this in their reflections. As well, sexual orientation and religious beliefs were not mentioned or commented upon by any of the participants in their reflections. The only exception concerned TCs enrolled in the course who indicated they would be seeking jobs within the Catholic school board after graduation. Several of these students actively sought to teach a lesson on homophobia as they determined this might be the only opportunity they would have to engage in this type of discussion with elementary students.

We believe assignments such as "Teaching With Change in Mind" are crucial to the development of future teachers because they provide TCs the opportunity to practice anti-oppression teaching with guidance and support. Assignments like this allow TCs to challenge and examine educational structures that may impede the learning of students (Sleeter & Owuor, 2011).

Conclusion and Future Directions

We are very cognizant that one 40-minute anti-oppression lesson in an elementary school is not enough to build capacity, but it is a start to deepening future teachers' understanding of inclusion. Having the experience of implementing the lessons with input from multiple stakeholders is one step towards building confidence. In addition, TCs posted their lessons on the university intranet to be shared amongst each other, giving all TCs access to 14 additional anti-oppression lesson plans for their future use in schools.

Through this research it was apparent that the TCs were developing the competence to consider anti-oppression topics in their work. One of the barriers to implementing anti-oppression work in the classroom is a lack of knowledge which we hope the in-school workshops and the collection of lesson plans will provide. Another barrier, lack of confidence, seems to be countered by the collaborative approach.

We would hope that sharing the findings of this project with future TCs may serve to address issues and concerns earlier. Reading the voices of those who have experienced

teaching anti-oppression lessons and hearing about common fears and issues may press TCs' thinking and further develop TCs' proficiency as culturally responsive pedagogues.

In terms of this project, we envision further framing and refining the assignment to build TCs' cultural competence and to further develop TCs' connection with their own social location and awareness of their students' social locations in schools. Of key importance is recognizing that all students (TCs and elementary pupils) have multiple layers of identity. We would want to create a greater culture of collaboration. The collaborative aspect of this assignment was key to its success and is crucial to future teachers seeing teaching as a communal, multidirectional affair.

Notes

1. "Matilda" was a teacher candidate in the grade 3/4 class that did a lesson on homophobia. All participant names are pseudonyms.
2. Students enrolled in an initial teacher education preparation program in Ontario, Canada which leads to a Bachelor of Education and certification to teach in two divisions, from Kindergarten to Grade 6 in Ontario schools.

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A Whisper of True Learning

Belinda C. Daniels

ABSTRACT

In this article, I describe my journey to develop my Indigenous teacher identity, and I explore constructs that either diminished or enhanced my identity development within the experiences of formal and non-formal learning. I narrate a pivotal moment in my teaching career that made me question what kind of teacher I was going to be. It was a “whisper of true learning” that awakened the depths of my *nêhiyâw* identity. It made me realize that I had forgotten who I was and, at the same time, that it was my responsibility to remember where I came from for the benefit of my students.

A Whisper of True Learning

Beginning as a Teacher

In my second year of teaching at a typical mainstream high school in western Canada, I taught History, English, and the Cree language. The school was large and overcrowded, as trailers in the form of portable classrooms had to be installed to the yellow brick structure. The school had a theatre, two gyms, a cafeteria, a chapel, a large industrial wood working room, and numerous classrooms—and a population of well over 1,300 students and 100 or so teachers.

My classroom was on the second floor, and I shared it with the science teacher. The lights were bright white fluorescent and the only natural lighting came from the back room, through a door if it was opened. On the other side of that door was a storage room filled with plants, along with science chemicals, glass in various-sized beakers, and so on. I had four or five rows of desks, too many for the amount of students I had,

which made the room look empty. I often stood at the front of the room where a platform was built a foot higher than the rest of the floor plan. The floor was made of white tile and the walls were either mainly empty cupboards or empty bulletin boards.

As a beginning teacher, I often wrote notes right out of the textbook because I did not know any better when it came to second language instruction, much less the teaching of an Indigenous language. It is also important to note that I was not a fluent speaker of the Cree language/nêhiyawêwin.¹ I could barely pronounce any of the long Cree words properly, much less confidently. It was the mentality at the time that, because I was Indigenous and grew up on a Reserve, I should know and speak some Cree. Although a good idea initially, it added pressure to my teaching assignment, not to mention frustration and stress as a beginning teacher.

This school had students enrolled from upper- and middle-class families. The student population at the time was mostly Euro-Canadians and a small percentage of new immigrant families. I was the only visible Indigenous, nêhiyâw teacher on staff, although there were a couple of other teachers who were of Métis and Dakota heritage who did not grow up on the Reserve. The irony of my teaching assignment was that this was the high school where I received my secondary education and from which I had graduated previous years before. Not much had changed at this high school in regard to teaching practices since I had left it as a student. Some of the same teachers who taught me were still there, teaching the same subjects.

When I think back to being a student, I realize I still suffer from the emotional scars I endured, such as discrimination and the feeling of not belonging there. I do not think those feelings ever go away, no matter how much time has passed. My urban high school years were not filled with joyful memories, and not at all like you see in movies like *Pretty in Pink* or *The Breakfast Club*. They were filled more with awkwardness, isolation, and alienation. I realize now that this is not an uncommon way to feel as an Indigenous student. As Gebhard (2013) affirms through research, “Indigenous students report frequent incidents of overt racism in school and often feel lonely and isolated while attending school” (Briarpatch Magazine: <http://briarpatchmagazine.com/articles/view/pipeline-to-prison>). Other factors may have also contributed to the feelings of isolation and alienation I experienced, as I did not go to elementary school with all the other students from the local feeder schools and I did not sign up for any of the team sports because of the self-consciousness I felt about my body. Worse, perhaps, was it the color of my skin? Was it the fact that schools were not made initially or intentionally for people like me, since the beginning of mainstream or Eurocentric education? “Indigenous people throughout the world are feeling the tensions created

by a Eurocentric education system that has taught them to distrust their Indigenous knowledge system, their elder's wisdom and their own learning spirit" (Battiste, 2013, p. 25). In the end, with all of these factors at play, high school was not a pleasant place for me.

Remembering Jake

As I write about these past memories of my early teaching experiences and my own high school experience, I am drawn back to a moment with a student, Jake. Within this story is the whisper of true learning and an awakening I wish to share. Jake was a young man who was always arriving late for my morning Period One class, which started at 8:35 a.m. He would walk into my room loudly and nonchalantly, or sometimes quietly depending on his mood, and slide into his desk, almost without me noticing. He often wore a leather coat with a bunny hug and white runners. I remember his hair always being wet and combed back. He almost always had a blank expression on his face, and rarely did he look happy. Now that I think back on it, my thoughts at the time were that his lateness and his attitude were not my issues to deal with; I was not his counselor, nor his therapist! But I did want him to be on time, which added to my constant annoyance and need to be in control.

According to researcher Pedro Noguera, as quoted by Gebhard (2013), "...racial disparities in school discipline and achievement mirror the disproportionate confinement of racialized people, and ... students most frequently targeted for punishment in school often look like smaller versions of the adults most likely to be targeted for incarceration." As a means of disciplining Jake, I remember saying, "Jake, you are always late, and when you're late, you don't know what you're doing and you're wasting your time because you never do anything. I sometimes wonder what is even the point!!?" I said this out loud and I used him as an example for the other students. He never did pass my class nor did he ever take it again. I thought at the time, "That is fine with me." It was not.

I still remember that event in my life like it was yesterday because it was a life-changing moment for me, one that I continue to regret. It caused me to ask myself what kind of teacher I was going to be. Up until then I had forgotten. Jake had given me a "whisper of true teaching and learning." This beautiful young man was of Indigenous descent, nêhiyâw/Cree or Métis. He, like other boys at his age, had a slick and arrogant "I am too cool for you" attitude that, I have learned with experience, is just how many boys are. I also know now that behaviors or ill-intentioned actions are always about something deeper.

Why was I choosing to be indifferent at that time? Why was I not wanting to see the real Jake for who he was? Why was I so focused on the behavior? Now I know better; that was not acceptable. I “pushed” that young man out of my class and maybe even out of school because of my attitude, misguided assumptions, judgment, and false sense of superiority. The way I handled that situation was what I learned from my teachers years earlier when I was a student. What I recognize now is that I was unconsciously being discriminatory and racist to someone of color, someone like me, and that it was normalized to do so. As Ladson-Billings states, “Because it is so enmeshed in the fabric of our social order, it appears both normal and natural to people in this culture” (cited in Parker, Dehyle, & Villenas, 1999, p. 12). The racism that is embedded in Canadian institutions (Laroque, 1989) is just as normalized in school culture.

I remember my English teacher humiliating me in front of a class of more than 30 students. He ridiculed me for always being five minutes late, saying to me that because I was always five minutes late, I would never amount to anything or succeed in anything. In that moment, I remember distinctly my feelings being hurt, I felt tears swell up, and anguish fueled my body. I was paralyzed wondering what I should do. Should I go sit down or should I leave? I stood there for a moment at the door and then stepped backed and closed the door. I never went back to that class and I was on the verge of quitting school that year because of my English teacher. He made me feel inadequate, like I was not good enough to even be in his classroom. His judgmental and ignorant behavior toward me caused serious emotional damage. It reminds me that what happens in our early adolescent stays with us for a lifetime. I sometimes wonder how many young men and women had he done that too? And then here I found myself, standing in the place of teacher, and doing the very same thing.

I believe it is because I did not understand all the social structures of mainstream education that come with being a teacher, and the pedagogies of the profession, that I was going through the motions of something deeper and subtle in an institution that perpetuates racism and discrimination. Berlak (as cited in Boler, 2004) states in her research findings:

Most graduates of teacher education programs were not prepared to deal with the realities they would face as teachers of African American, Latino, Asian immigrant, and poor children. She was convinced that many of those entering the profession were more likely to contribute to the destruction of these children than to their academic and personal growth and power. (p. 126)

I have to agree. In the beginning I thought school was a safe and a neutral place, but I learned that this was not really the case. It was not a safe and neutral place for me, nor was it for Jake. I wonder if it is for any Indigenous students? Gebhard (2013) states, “By assuming that classrooms are neutral, apolitical spaces, schools risk pushing the same colonial agenda that Aboriginal education was founded on.” As an Indigenous, nêhiyâw woman and educator, I struggled and grappled with a lot of the practices of mainstream education. I was getting pulled into curricula that did not resonate with me. Over time I learned that the school’s expectations were mirroring the Ministry of Education’s mandate, which not only added extreme pressure, but also a sense of pressure for conformity. Furthering this disposition was the classroom environment, which was seemingly cold and uninviting. Even as a student it was unfamiliar for me. For Jake, I am sure it was much the same way.

There was such a disconnect between who and what I was and what I was expected to teach. I remember walking into the English department room and looking over the novels, wondering where the literature was that was written by Aboriginal authors, as we lived in Canada, a country with a strong First Nations presence. We had a great number of literary authors and poets, so surely that was not the problem. When I did engage my students in experiential learning, taking them outside the walls of the school’s yellow brick building, I remember questions being asked of me by my teacher colleagues, “Where is that in the curriculum?” I thought that after receiving my Bachelor of Education degree, I could teach my students what was relevant to my existence as an Indigenous person and to society’s existence, but it wasn’t like that. Not only were my colleagues questioning my class syllabus, but sometimes students were too, especially if they were white and the context of the lessons seemed unknown and unrecognizable. I did not have much say as to where I was going to teach, what I was going to teach, and for how long. I recall my thoughts as a beginning teacher:

My childhood was good, although I had lost my mother, it was stable. My life in the city as an adolescent was much different, but it did not mean I could teach and counsel these particular “at-risk” children. Because I was First Nations, it was thought that I could teach Aboriginal students better for some reason. But I knew I lacked experienced, counseling skills, behavior modification skills and social services procedures. (Daniels-Fiss, 2005, p. 12)

I remember I was mainly assigned to schools that were highly populated with Indigenous students. However, I did not really question these notions until much later in my teaching career. At the time, as a beginning teacher, I was in survival mode and I was imitating the teachers around me to try and live out the role of teacher.

As I was struggling with my own career, trying to stay above water, I just did not have the capacity to understand where Jake was coming from or from what conditions. I was also learning to be a “white” teacher in the midst of chaos; I was racializing my own kind unconsciously, and I was turning into someone who saw color. What was I doing? Because racism is blended into the school system, I picked up unfavorable teaching practices and it was only my second year in the profession. “There is racism in school systems which can be traced back to the Euro-Canadian interpretation of history, an interpretation that has been uncritically transmitted in the education system” (Larocque, 1991, p. 73). I knew I had to do something differently, because past memories of my own education all flooded back to me through my experience with Jake. I knew this was not who I was; this was not where I began. This is not who I wanted to be.

Moving Backward to My Childhood

I needed to go back to my beginnings as an individual of my Indigenous heritage, a *nêhiyâw*, from a small Reserve two hours north of the city. In my home community, growing up on the Reserve, we referred to each other as Cousin or Friend when we addressed each other. It was also Brother or Sister, if we were first Cousins. Our ties of kinship were persistent in our families. The majority of the teachers, assistants, and other employees were also *nêhiyâw* in my Reserve school. A stream of activities were offered that were cultural, language based, and relevant to our existence. This teaching was vastly different than my education in the city.

In my upbringing, as I was raised by my grandparents, I saw my grandparents’ role model of faith, hard work, and love. I saw integrity and pride in their work and they instilled this in me. I wanted to emulate this in my own life. I saw my grandfather pray daily, either through meditation, holding sweet-grass,² or kneeling at the foot of his bed, a combination of spirituality and Catholicism known as syncretism, or “a blend of two belief systems. I was raised to respect aspects of both these faiths” (Daniels-Fiss, 2005, p. 3).

One evening, as a child, I watched my grandfather for a long time while he prayed. I am sure he must have sensed me standing and watching, as his prayer seemed unusually long compared to other times. When he was done, I asked, “Grandpa, what are you doing?” He replied that he was “talking to god.” I asked, “About what? Who is god?” My grandfather replied that God was the all-knowing spirit, and that he was asking to be watched over by God, protected, guided, to have a good life, and for our family to be well. He told me that I should pray too, every day, and ask for wisdom, knowledge, and guidance... which I have, and continue to do to this day. Prayer is an important practice in my life as a *nêhiyâw* because it reminds me to be grateful

for who I am and what I have. It is one of those essential teachings of the tipi³ or the medicine wheel⁴ and it makes me pause for a moment and breathe in the present. For nêhiyâw people, and other traditional Indigenous nations, the tipi and medicine wheel teachings are symbolic of life and of how we go about our journey in acceptance. These teachings are always about practicing to be a better human being. As one example, practicing being in the moment was a teaching I learned at a young age. It is about letting go of control and not worrying about tomorrow or being concerned with the past. It is a fresh start continuously. *The Sacred Tree* (Lane, Bopp, Bopp, & Brown, 2003) illustrates this fresh start:

It is in the east of the medicine wheel that all journeys begin. When a path is new, it totally occupies our attention. Our sights are focused on the next few steps. One of the most important gifts to be acquired in the east is the capacity to focus our attention on the events of the present moment. As young children we knew instinctively how to do this. When as children we watched a beautiful butterfly or examined any interesting new aspect of the world, we were completely absorbed by what we were doing. (p. 45)

Because prayer is one of my most important teachings of our people, I have learned to pass on this teaching to my own children and to my students around me. Prayer is the center of our nêhiyâw and Indigenous ceremonies and our life. Our customs are based on this ceremony because we believe we are spiritual beings having a physical experience. I have heard this said time and time again. Ceremonies are a form of acknowledgment and connection to the spirit world, an acknowledgment that we are all one. The custom is that the ceremony is repeated because we know we are not in control of our lives. “Cree people believe they do not own their lives, so what lies ahead is unpredictable” (Daniels-Fiss, 2005, p. 50).

When I was little, my grandparents took me everywhere. This, too, was a value of my family. We often visited old people. We traveled from our Reserve to my grandmother’s Reserve. I had many other grandparents that I referred to in the nêhiyâw way of life, as we do not have one set of grandparents for each parent, but many. My grandparents’ brothers and sisters are also my grandparents. When visiting, food was an essential item which was always offered, even when people were in the middle of doing something. Everything was stopped to visit with one another and to eat. There was always “time” to engage in this act of relationship and sharing. My grandparents always went away with parting gifts or vice versa; they gave away gifts as well. My grandmother sometimes gave away her quilted blankets that she made by hand, out of a gesture of good will. My grandparents also gave other things such as berries from a summer harvest, plants like

red willow,⁵ rat-root,⁶ sweet-grass, and sometimes bear grease⁷ as gifts. I saw this act of good will firsthand, which instilled a sense of generosity and sharing deep within me. Although we did not have much, there was always something to give.

Because food was a sacred gift, there were many customary teachings that went along with it. In our own home it was always offered to guests as a sign of respect. Food was never wasted or thrown away, or left out on the counter or table overnight. Leftovers were nonexistent because we had such a large family. Food was the center of ceremonial celebrations as well, like feasts, which were common in my home community while I was growing up. There are protocols with having and giving a feast, which is given for all kinds of reasons: the coming of a new season, a new baby, or a memorial. Our lives were centered around food.

In the summer we planted our own potato garden as a family, and sometimes turnips and carrots as well. It was by no means a little family garden; it was a lot of hard work. As a result, I received an appreciation for the earth's soil and what she could grow; it was fascinating to pull food out of the earth! As for meat, sometimes our uncle would go hunting for a moose or two throughout the year and share that with us, which was always a treat. We would also pick blueberries, raspberries, and occasionally even cranberries during the summer and preserve them through canning, eating them only on special occasions. Gardening and collecting our own wood and water were all essential teachings that fostered respect, independence, and cooperation. Prayer and faith went hand in hand with food and celebrations. All of these teachings were sacred, instilling in us as children a strong sense of relationship with each other and the land.

In my Reserve school in my home community, some of the relevant teaching moments included plenty of opportunities to experience outdoor activities, like learning to fish and or track rabbits with the use of snare wire. As we engaged in such activities, we raised questions such as, "Where do rabbits live?" and "Why do they turn white in the winter?" The teacher made room in our school day to go out and explore the land. To do this together as a group made it even more memorable; the teacher was coming into our space, validating who we were as *nêhiyâwak* children. It also made our existence relevant to the land and to the place that we lived.

"Both my grandparents gave me a foundation of Cree ways... we have our own maps of teachings and meanings" (Daniels-Fiss, 2005, p. 48). Although diminished by cognitive imperialism (Battiste, 1986), the knowledge is still there, often revealed to us in the form of stillness, silence, prayers, and dreams, when we are actively searching for our own stories, answers, and pathways (Daniels-Fiss, 2008).

A Youth in the City

As a teen, wanting to experience life in the city, I moved away from my home community and the care and guidance of my grandparents for a more tumultuous existence. Life was sometimes difficult, unpredictable, and exciting. Not only was I living with assignments that were looming over my head, but I was also dealing with a lot more....and the familiarities of home did not exist in the city. It was during the late 80s and early 90s that I moved to the city of Saskatoon. While attending high school, the classrooms were not filled with other Indigenous students, rather there were just two or three of us in sporadic pockets throughout the school. We took comfort in each other's presence, with the fact that we were not alone in the blanket of whiteness.

Jake was dealing with the same issues I was, just 10 years later. In his mainstream education, the *nêhiyâw* teachings were not understood, not even by me in that time and place. In the hierarchical system in which I was teaching, the values of the tipi or medicine wheel were not being lived. In fact, the school system was perpetuating a form of colonization. Gebhard (2013) stated:

The assumption that the education system today is devoid of its oppressive and violent past unfairly lets schools off the hook. Links between education and incarceration for Indigenous people in Canada are rarely made beyond pointing out that many Aboriginal people in custody are under-educated, often without high school diplomas.

Jake reminded me that I had forgotten what it was like growing up in the city, living in borderline poverty conditions, in an unstable home situation. I had forgotten what it was like not getting enough sleep the night before because there was a party going on in my living room, what it was like being awakened by loud music or encouraged to come and join the party. Worse, I had forgotten what it was like to be worried about my safety. I had forgotten what it was like to be peer pressured and coerced into breaking the law or witnessing others break the law. I had forgotten what it was like to grow up with circumstances that are beyond a young person's control. I had forgotten what it was like to be humiliated by the teacher in front of a class of students. Given my childhood on the Reserve and the teachings of my grandparents and people, I remained in culture shock throughout my whole existence and experience in high school. Was Jake living in a state of culture shock too?

Present Moment

In my present moment, a student walks into my class; she just “pops in” a half hour late. She has missed over a week of school. My instinctive reaction is to be disappointed and dismayed, but then I breathe and respond in caring intentions. I casually say “Hi” and make a joke that I don’t recognize her. She reacts shyly and responds that she has been “busy.” I reply, “Busy, huh? Well, I am glad that’s over and I am glad you are here; now let’s catch up!” I am calm and relaxed. I go over past assignments and I make time for her.

I do not react harshly because of my epiphany with Jake, 10 years ago in my second year of teaching. My epiphany caused me to go back to my origins, to my childhood upbringing on the Reserve, and to ask myself,

What kind of teacher do I want to be? How was I taught? Who were my teachers? How can I incorporate into my identity as a teacher the other roles that I play, such as mother, auntie, sister, and, most importantly, granddaughter? What do these roles have in common with being a teacher, a great teacher?

As my grandparents raised me with love, compassion, and respect, they never made me feel like I did not belong. They always showed me patience and guidance and role modeled what was expected of me. Their love was never conditional. Couldn’t I instill all of these values too as an educator? The answer is “yes.”

My values are no longer conflicted. Who I was as a beginning teacher right out of college no longer exists. I am no longer emulating the qualities of the white teachers I had as a student nor am I perpetuating the colonial nature of the educational system. I do not believe my upbringing is a negative or a deficiency, as I was taught to believe as both a student and a teacher in the education system. I do not believe that Indigenous students should be unsuccessful or should fail because of culture.

The belief in twentieth-century social analysis about the incommensurability of different cultures encourages a trivializing of the impact of colonial oppression by attributing the effects and the conditions of oppression to this very factor of incommensurability. In the example of aboriginal people, effects of oppression are cast as ‘value conflicts’ between white and Indian cultures, suggesting that inequality is inevitable, and merely an effect of different orientations to work, education, and family. (St. Denis, 2009, p. 168)

In order for me to be comfortable and to find a secure place in my mind and soul as a teacher, I needed to be proud of who I was and what I could offer. As a result of my experience with Jake a decade ago, I changed and unlearned what I was taught in Euro-mainstream high school and in my first degree in college. I went back to the practices and customs of my grandparents and community. I returned to building the relationships that are instrumental in being a great teacher.

There is an urgent need to change the well-rehearsed and scripted story of school (Pushor, 2007). I know that streaming our Indigenous students into categories of race or heritage is discriminatory. I know that the content of lessons has to relate to the student. I know that there needs to be more visible Indigenous educators and other Indigenous personnel involved in our schools. I know that sitting in rows and reading out of textbooks is killing the creative spirits in my students and, just as important, in me. Most importantly, I know that being in the moment, being spontaneous and fascinated about what is being learned in class, makes me realize that teaching has to be animated and alive. For me, this is what parallels the medicine wheel and tipi teachings, being in the moment and fascinated and full of love!

Rejecting the textbooks and the questions at the end of each chapter, I relearned the art of storytelling. This is a teaching method I learned unknowingly as a child and have come to perfect as a teacher. I relearned how to teach through experience, collaboration, and demonstration. I created opportunities for engagement and learned to listen to my students. It was not about perfection but learning to be better at these skills and not afraid to learn from and to admit mistakes. Teaching is always learning and always growing.

When I think back to my beginnings years as a teacher, I see that I have learned many lessons. Some of them have been painful, as Jake's was. I think about who I am now and I see that I have grown from my lessons. I have returned to the teachings of the many k  ht  yak, our old people, in my life and most importantly though my grandparents' Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Through all of these lessons, I have learned to be actively responsible for my learning and to rethink how we do education for all students. I know that we can no longer label Indigenous students as culturally different because of their heritage; this only leads to more inequality.

This objectification of culture also suggests that culture is something to be 'lost' and 'found.' It is as if people are no longer agents; culture happens to them. A notion like 'cultural determinism' then becomes possible. Cultural determinism has been used

to justify racism; hence the notion of 'cultural racism' that becomes another way to justify discrimination. (St. Denis, 2009, p. 169)

I am truly grateful for Jake. It is because of this whisper of true learning that I awoke to the cycle of racism and discrimination and its embedded existences in our schools and decided to do something about it. I wanted to learn how European systems operated and to what extent. I am grateful that I awoke to who I was and to who I was meant to be because it is what has led me to where I am now. Much work remains to bring balance, equality, and a respectful co-existence in our schools. I am ready to forgive, willing to collaborate, and happy to teach. I see my nêhiyâw values and beliefs as an expression of my Indigenous knowledge and identity. I have something to offer. I have purpose, however large or small, that I help encourage and instill in my Indigenous students and my family. It is not about my culture, because I am more than my culture. It is because I am Cree. It is because I am a nêhiyâw that I am unique in all ways: historically, politically, educationally, and linguistically.

Notes

1. Also known as the Cree language. As this article explores Indigenous identity, I will use Indigenous terms for naming language, places, and people. It should be noted that in the nehiyaw language, the Roman Standard Orthography uses only lower case letters for all Cree words, regardless of conventions in English to capitalize names, places, and proper nouns. For further reference, see the work of Jean L. Okimasis and Arok Wolvengrey, *How to Spell It in Cree* (2008).
2. Sweet-grass is a plant that grows throughout the prairies. It has a purple root and a distinct smell. It is harvested during the summer months to be used as incense that purifies the nehiyaw mind, body, and spirit through an act of prayer.
3. Tipi teachings refer to family values, such as love, respect, faith, and so forth. There are 15 common values of the tipi, also referring to our values of the home in modern times.
4. Medicine wheel is the four quadrants of our being, referring to the emotional, spiritual, mental, and physical aspects of our nature and always practicing to be aware of these—balanced as a human being.

5. Red willow is used for many things. The bark is used as a medicine or an additive to tobacco, or a purification cleanse. It is also used in practical ways such as to make red willow basketry.
6. Rat-root is a plant that grows in marsh-like areas or lakes, rivers, and streams. It is harvested to be used as a medicine that can either be made into a tea or chewed.
7. Bear grease is a balm to be used as a healing medicine for sore muscles, skin problems, and a remedy for hair thickness and health.

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Project Capabilities and Adults With Intellectual Disabilities: Towards Effective Interviewing for a Better Social Participation

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ABSTRACT

This practice-based paper presents a series of tips and techniques for interviewing for a better social participation. While we worked on Project Capabilities, we learned valuable lessons we wished to share with practitioners and researchers who work within an inclusive perspective. We argue that qualitative interviewing requires skillful means that are not always an integral part of research preparation, and we share tips and techniques that we developed throughout the process. As we collected the qualitative data through one-on-one interviews, and taught participants to self-film using iPads, we found that traditional interviewing techniques were too rigid to engage with people living with an intellectual disability. Instead, we used a blend of motivational interviewing and collaborative inquiry techniques, and built rapport with the participants through online social networking. Mobile technologies were also used to build rapport, empowering participants and allowing non-intrusive filming of interviews.

Introduction

Project Capabilities is a collaborative action research which relies on Sen's (1992) and Nussbaum's (2000) capabilities approach to help adults living with an intellectual disability (ID) become better self-advocates and serve as role models to other adults living with an ID. The capabilities approach (Nussbaum, 2000;

Sen, 1992) focuses on what individuals are able to do, as opposed to what they are not able to do. Using the capabilities approach shifts the dialogue around adults living with an ID from one of deficiency and dependency to one of empowerment, enabling them to make their own life choices and decisions by helping them to access the tools they need to reach their goals. Project Capabilities builds on 10 years of research with people with intellectual disabilities, which has relied on collaborative action research to help this population become better integrated into their communities (Davidson, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c; Davidson, 2012; Davidson, Leblanc, Leno, Clément, Godbout, et al., 2004; Leblanc, Paruthi, Davidson, Clément, Godbout, et al., 2008).

In this particular study, our research team collaborated with eight adults with light to moderate intellectual disabilities to co-create self-advocacy videos. These individuals wanted to become better self-advocates with the ultimate goal of empowering themselves and others, and breaking down the stigma against adults with intellectual disabilities within the broader community. The researchers collected qualitative data through a series of one-on-one interviews with each participant. Interviews were used to help set goals for the participants' self-advocacy work, and to enable them to identify elements of their own lives they were proud of that could serve as an inspiration to others. Mobile technologies (i.e., iPads and iPhones) were used to facilitate communication between the researchers and participants, and as tools to co-create self-advocacy videos that could be shared with the broader community via mobile technologies and social media platforms.

The research team read about interviewing techniques in several well-known research textbooks, including *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data* by Herbert J. Rubin and Irene S. Rubin (2012), and *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research* by John W. Creswell (2008). While these works provide good structured procedures for collecting qualitative data, their approaches tend to be very rigid. Creswell (2008), for example, suggests that the researcher should prepare a list of specific interview questions before an interview, and that each participant should answer all questions. He further suggests that interviews should be directed from the interviewer to interviewee, and advises the interviewer to "keep your opinions to yourself" (p. 238). In contrast, we found that motivational interviewing techniques proved to be more effective for interviewing adults with intellectual disabilities. Motivational interviewing relies on skills such as knowing how to ask open-ended questions, affirming, and reflective listening (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). We found these techniques to be invaluable as we prepared to conduct the interviews.

The reader should be reminded that this article focuses on our approach to interviewing people with intellectual disabilities rather than on the data we collected. In the next section, we describe the process we used to interview the participants, and some of the lessons we learned from the experience that can serve as helpful tips for interviewing fragile populations efficiently. We start by describing our recruitment approach, which was instrumental to the success of this study, and the blend of interviewing techniques we used during each phase of data collection.

Recruiting Participants

We recruited a total of eight adults (two females and six males) who take part in organizations that work with adults with ID. One of these organizations was LiveWorkPlay, a charitable organization based in Ottawa (Ontario), which focuses on helping adults living with ID to integrate into the community (Live Work Play, 2013). The other organization, People First of Canada, has provincial and territorial chapters that strive for full inclusion of all people as equal members of the community (People First of Canada, 2006). During the recruitment phase, we attended a LiveWorkPlay Annual General Meeting in September 2012 to present Project Capabilities and to recruit participants. We also networked on social media and had Skype calls with People First of Canada members with whom we were unable to meet face-to-face due to distance.

An important lesson learned during the recruitment phase was the importance of establishing relationships with potential participants through face-to-face meetings and social media interactions *before* conducting the interviews. While the building of friendships with participants before interviewing runs counter to the advice of most research methodology textbooks, we found this was vital when working with a fragile population, such as with people with ID. Building upon these established relationships generated interest in what we do and created a feeling of trust with potential participants as the project got under way. We became part of the larger community that serves people with ID.

First Interview

The first interview allowed us to identify together the personal goals and ambitions of our participants. In contrast to traditional interviewing techniques, which suggest coming to the interview with a structured interview protocol in hand, we conducted our first interviews using a very unstructured format. We asked the participants broad and open-ended questions about their lives, hopes, and dreams, and achievements they were proud of. We allowed the participants to shape the course of the conversation,

which allowed them to determine the topics and areas of interest that they felt were important.

During the interviews, we sought to build rapport with the participants by reciprocal sharing of information about our lives, rather than relying on a traditional one-way question-and-answer approach. We further sought to build reciprocity outside of the interviews through ongoing interactions with the participants by using online social networking through Facebook. We used Facebook to interact with participants in their day-to-day lives, learning about their hobbies, accomplishments, and other personal information, while simultaneously sharing information about our own lives. For example, upon meeting one participant for the first time, she said to Christina, “How is your dog doing?”, having seen pictures posted on Facebook. The interviews therefore took on the feel of a discussion between friends, rather than a formal interview, which might have proven intimidating for the participants.

As Rubin and Rubin (2012) suggest, during the interviews, we used follow-up questions and probes to get additional details or depth and to encourage participants to share their thoughts. Many participants were surprised that we were interested in hearing about their lives. The participants were therefore initially shy and required prompting and encouragement to begin speaking. We also found that repeating phrases used by the interviewees was a helpful way to clarify their thoughts. For example: “You said that you got a career award at your job. Tell us more about that.”

Another helpful approach in interviewing our participants was a technique from the collaborative inquiry and social engagement collection of tools developed by Chevalier and Buckles (2008). Participants were given three index cards and asked to write down three aspects of their lives that they were proud of. They were then asked to place each card on one point of a triangle of tape on the floor. Participants stood on the card that they were most proud of and explained why this made them proud. The use of physical space to represent aspects of their lives that participants were proud of helped them concentrate on the reasons why they were proud of these events or themes. This contributed to the selection of the topic of the self-advocacy video.

Second Interview and Filming

The specific topics identified during the first interview and subsequent email, and Facebook exchanges with the participants, allowed us to be more focused on a particular self-advocacy topic during the second interviews. The second interviews were filmed at a location chosen by the participant—usually their home or workplace.

Below is an overview of the interview and filming process:

- 1) We used iPhones and iPads to film the participants as we interviewed them in more depth about their area of interest. We showed participants how to self-film on iPads, and they were able to film themselves saying whatever they wanted about their chosen topic without prompting from us. Some researchers have noted that video recording of interviewees often leads participants to become hesitant to speak (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). In contrast, we were able to use video recording to our advantage by training the participants on how to use the technology themselves, and empowering them through self-recording. We told them if they made a mistake and wanted to start over, we could delete the clip and they could re-record. Because they were in control of the process, we found they opened up more, and were less shy in front of the camera.
- 2) We recorded the participants using our own iPhones. The unobtrusive nature of the iPhones made it easier for the participants to forget that we were filming, and allowed for the interview to unfold as a more natural conversation between friends.

Creating the Self-Advocacy Videos

Once all of the footage had been collected, we used *Camtasia* to create a video for each participant, which we uploaded on YouTube as private videos. Our goal was to create a video that truly represented the efforts of the participants as self-advocates. We operated under the motto “good enough is the new great” as coined by New York Times reporter Robert Mackey in 2009. Our intent was never to create professional videos. Rather, we wanted to create videos that represented the true nature of the participants’ discourse, videos that they could share within the community and feel proud of.

When creating the videos, we felt it was important to use “I” language whenever text came across the screen. For example, saying “I invited Project Capabilities to my house” rather than “Cooper invited us to his house” completely changed the overall tone of the video. As researchers, we have a natural tendency to tell the “story” for the participant, rather than allowing the participant to tell his or her own story, from his or her perspective. When putting text on the screen, therefore, we made sure to use the participants’ own words and tell it from their perspective. Once the videos were completed, they were uploaded to the Project Capabilities YouTube channel as private videos and shared with the participants for their approval and for the preparation of the next step.

Member Checking and Validation

To proceed to member checking and validating the videos, the research team held a focus group that it called a “viewing party.” Participants shared their initial thoughts about the videos and made suggestions for modifications. Reactions from the participants were overwhelmingly positive. For example, the research team showed one of the self-advocacy videos, and a conversation about independent living ensued. An excerpt from the focus group follows:

- Participant: He did a great job. Powerful.
- Researcher: Powerful message, to whom?
- Participant: To the community. To us. To LiveWorkPlay. I was thinking more to people with disabilities. Or people that have been told they may never live on their own. This gives hope that they may be able to live on their own. It also gives you a powerful message like saying you can be on your own and not move in a residence or not to give up. Because sometimes I feel like giving up and going into a [...] not a nursing home, but a group home like where I have my own apartment, but I go for meals downstairs and stuff like that. But that gives a message that I can cook on my own.

Community Reactions

Following the focus group, the research team made the series of self-advocacy videos on the Project Capabilities YouTube channel public and shared the link with the LiveWorkPlay and People First of Canada communities on the Project Capabilities Facebook page. The self-advocacy videos can be viewed here:

- Cooper Gage (2 videos): <http://youtu.be/bDqnyUcQZDU> & <http://youtu.be/Vj38MK2DlY>
- Valerie Wolbert: <http://youtu.be/-eWBhHiK2q4>
- Paul Knoll: http://youtu.be/i5O_C9ZTvcU
- Carl Sanderson: <http://youtu.be/suj6LDzjrrY>
- Ryan Nevitt: http://youtu.be/LevahXnP_4s
- Caroline Matte: <http://youtu.be/t5lluY55VU0>
- Daniel Pinsonneault: <http://youtu.be/Ur4toFJ8mXw>
- Gage Emond: <http://youtu.be/VvPCfnY92h0>

We moderated comments on Facebook and YouTube that came both from members of the intellectual disabilities community, and from others outside the community. People congratulated participants for their courage, said that the self-advocacy videos were inspiring, and asked for more tips about independent living.

Conclusion

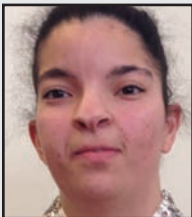
While conducting this study, we found that many of the traditional textbooks on interviewing for qualitative research did not meet the needs we faced when interviewing adults with ID. Instead, we drew on non-traditional techniques including motivational interviewing, collaborative inquiry, and social engagement tools as well as interactions outside the scheduled one-on-one interviews through social media to build rapport with participants. Rapport building was instrumental in allowing participants to feel comfortable with the researchers and take an active role in the development and creation of the self-advocacy videos. Using mobile technologies, such as iPads and iPhones, were also important factors in helping to build rapport, as they allowed participants to readily self-film, and permitted non-intrusive filming of interviews. Finally, social media platforms (Facebook and YouTube) allowed the participants to share their self-advocacy videos with the broader community, and to receive feedback from peers and other community members.

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LINK TO:

www.liveworkplay.ca

www.peoplefirstofcanada.ca



Who Are You? On Being Half Indian and Half White

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ABSTRACT

Coming from a mixed ethnic identity is difficult, particularly if the two identities of which you are mixed look physically very different. Through personal narratives, the author makes visible how one's appearance can determine how other people interpret one's identity. She examines challenges that arise when the messages one receives about one's identity are contradictory and relates these contradictory messages to the concept of social dominance. The author makes it apparent that place and community establish one's feelings about oneself. She concludes that an individual of mixed race cannot extract one ethnicity from the other; the individual will always be both.

Foreword



have chosen to use the words "Indian" and "white" in this article because those were the first words I knew and used. They are the words I use with family and friends, though not usually with others. Thomas King (2012) had this to say on the use of the words Indian and white:

When I was a kid, Indians were Indians. Sometimes Indians were Mohawks or Cherokees or Crees or Blackfoot or Tlingits or Seminoles. But mostly they were Indians. Columbus got blamed for the term, but he wasn't being malicious. He was looking for India and thought he had found it. He was mistaken, or course, and as time went on, various folks and institutions tried to make the matter right. Indians became Amerindians and Aborigines and Indigenous People and American Indians. Lately, Indians have become First Nations in Canada and Native Americans in the

United States, but the fact of the matter is that there has never been a good collective noun because there never was a collective to begin with. (p. xii)

In reference to the use of the word white, King (2012) said this, "Let's agree that within the confines of this book the term is neutral and refers to a general group of people as diverse and indefinable as 'Indians'" (p. xiv).

**Who Are You?
On Being Half White and Half Indian**

"Who are you?"

"I am Indian."

"Who are you?"

"I am white."

"Who are you?"

"I am half Indian and half white."

"Half? How could you be half?"

"Well, I tell ya. It's not easy....."

On Being Half and Half

Mirrors reflect, a lake reflects, a window reflects, a shiny new car reflects, a computer screen reflects, an icy road reflects, and people reflect. If we look closely enough in all of these things, we can see our reflection shining back at us. Sometimes our reflection is clear but other times our reflection is distorted. Sometimes our reflection is so distorted that it does not look like us at all. And sometimes what is reflected back matches our outside very well, but does not match our inside at all. That is what it feels like to be half and half. It is confusing at times, trying to fit that outside into that inside.

My dad is white and if you saw him you would know that he is white. My mom is Métis and if you saw her you would know that she is Indian. I have dark brown hair and brown eyes, but my skin is light and my features are ambiguous. If you saw me you would assume that I am white. At least, in my experience, that is what most people assume.

As a brand new teacher I found myself very often at school late into the evening, well after all of the sensible teachers had gone home. The caretaker was the only other person around and he would often stop in my classroom as he made his rounds. I welcomed his company as it gave me a much needed break. We would visit for a while before he would move on. This one time he told me a story about

his neighbors, who were Indians. It was not a good story. When he had finished his story he declared quite dramatically, "I hate Indians." This reminded me that he did not know that I was Indian. I thought to myself, do I say nothing or do I tell him that I am Indian? I chose the latter.

"Who are you?"

"I am white."

"At least that's what they told me."

Identity is not only about who you see in that reflection, it also includes what others see when they look at you. People reflect. It is often in these experiences with others that I become conscious of both sides of my identity. That Indian side and that white side. Yet I am not completely one or the other. Although others may see me as white because of how I look on the outside, it does not reflect what I feel like on the inside. Richardson (2006) describes the process this way, "Metis identity is created through a process of social interaction and dialogic relationships between the inner world and the external world" (p. 57). That is what this story is about, attempting to create balance between that outward reflection and that inward self.

On Being From One

Perhaps before we go any further I should define what I mean by identity. "Identity' may be defined as the distinctive character belonging to any given individual, or shared by all members of a particular social category or group" (Rummens, 2001, p. 3). Put more simply, identity is what you answer when someone asks, "Who are you?" For many people identity formation is an unconscious, straightforward event.

Others [not from a racial minority], especially white [North] Americans, manifest ethnic and racial identity in mostly unconscious ways through their behaviors, values, beliefs and assumptions. For them, ethnicity is usually invisible and unconscious because societal norms have been constructed around their racial, ethnic, and cultural frameworks, values, and priorities and then referred to as "standard American [Canadian] culture" rather than as "ethnic identity." (Chavez & Guido-Dibrito, 1999, p. 39)

Some identities are dominant and thus deemed to be more valuable than others. Societies which are based on social class always have an element of dominance. When we talk about social dominance, we are talking about a social hierarchy with a group at the top and a group at the bottom. The group at the top will have the most

representation, within the highest ranks, of all major social institutions. The group at the bottom will have the least representation within the highest ranks, of all major social institutions (Sidanius & Pratto, 1993). In Saskatchewan, it is quite evident that white people belong to the top group and Indian people belong to the bottom group.

Even for people from a racial minority, identity formation, while perhaps not an unconscious act, is still relatively straightforward. My husband is Indian and if you saw him you would know he is Indian. He comes from a Reservation. His parents are Indian, his grandparents were Indian. There are no questions for him. He knows who he is. He is Indian. This is not to say that he does not have any struggles with his identity. Coming from the “bottom” group in our society, he has not had a lot of opportunity to see himself or his culture reflected in the broader community. He has other pressures on his identity as well. The government in Canada has weighed in and defined Indian as a political identity and Indian status, along with band membership, is legislated federally. Even amongst Indian people there is a hierarchy. “The production of a cultural hierarchy, organized around notions of tradition and assimilated Indians, denigrates some identities and honors others” (St. Denis, 2007, p. 1081). So, if you speak your language, you are seen to be more Indian than a person who does not speak his or her language. Yet, even with all of this, my husband can confidently, and without hesitation, answer “I am Indian” when someone asks him who he is.

Who Are You?

Our identity is formed over time by identity schema. “Self-schemata are cognitive generalizations about the self, derived from past experience, that organize and guide the processing of self-related information contained in the individual’s social experiences” (Markus, 1977, p. 64). Self-identity, our identity schema, is something that develops over time, with experience. Our experience, our stories, fit into our schema. Identity formation is a social experience which involves other people. Other people can be our immediate family, our extended family, our peers, and members of the larger community. Our earliest experiences, those experiences that help us begin to form our identity schema, start with our families in our home.

I grew up in a small northern mining town. Lots of new Canadians found a home in the north; in the mines. My father came, like many, off the farm to the north. Where good paying jobs were plentiful. My father’s family lived far away in southern Alberta. My mother is Métis and her family lived in the North before the mining boom. It was my mother’s family that I grew up surrounded by. My Auntie Rose lived close to us. I had only to walk through my Auntie Margie’s yard, across the road, and then I was

at my Auntie Rose's house. I enjoyed visiting my Auntie Rose. I loved to talk when I was young and so did she, so we got along quite well. I have always been interested in history and learning about my family history. When I visited my aunt she would show me old photo albums. She would tell me who this person was and who that person was. I would listen intently. The faces that I saw in those pictures, faces of my family, were brown. They were Indian.

When I looked in a mirror, the face that I saw reflected back at me was Indian. I did not see a white person. I saw a face that matched my mother's family. But my father also had some influence. He was the head of the household, as they said back then. In many ways my home life mimicked a traditional white, middle-class lifestyle.

On Sunday mornings we would rise early and dress in our best clothes for church. After church, we would go home for Sunday brunch. It was only on Sundays that my father would cook: eggs, pancakes, bacon, toast, the works. After brunch we would go for a Sunday drive around town. Other families would be out, driving around town. In a small town when you pass a car, you wave. Everyone had their own individual wave: a full wave, a fast wave, a wave that looked more like a salute. My father would open and then close his hand while leaving it on the steering wheel, as he gave his head a nod. That was his wave. We would then stop at the drive-in, a little fast-food stand that sold ice cream. Other families would be stopped here and lots of visiting would go on. We would all get a "Nutty buddy" ice cream and then continue on our drive around town, before heading home to watch *The Wonderful World of Disney*.

"Who are you?"

"I am Indian. I am White."

At least that's what they told me.

There is some contradiction in these experiences. Although I saw myself as an Indian, my lifestyle was more consistent with white culture. Coming from two distinct places creates some duality inside. It is like inside me I have this Indian self and this white self and they usually get along and mix quite well without any questions. But at other times that Indian self and that white self are pulled apart and I am forced to look at and examine these two sides separately. Am I Indian or am I white? I wonder why I cannot be both.

When Half and Half Does Not Equal One

When we consider the issue of Social Dominance (SD) we find that, “The entire reasoning of SD theory rests on the simple assumption that different ethnic groups may reliably be ranked along a single social status continuum” (Sidanius & Pratto, 1993, p. 182). Within this continuum we would find white on one side and Indian on the other side, with other social/cultural groups in between. Part of the struggle with being half white and half Indian is that there is such a large gap between these two groups. This polarization is what creates tension.

Grade 4 was a very good year; I remember many things. We did a unit on dinosaurs that must have resonated with me because I remember my Pterodactyl report. I thought I was quite clever because I knew that the p in Pterodactyl was silent. We also did a unit on Plains Indians. We learned that Plains Indians lived in teepees on the plains and they hunted buffalo. We fashioned paper teepees into an Indian village. (It would not be until University that I would learn anything of more significance about Indian people.) We also did a unit, I would guess that it was in Social Studies, about different cultures in the world. We were taught that in Canada we are multi-cultural; we are not a melting pot like the United States. At least that’s what they taught us. So I went home and asked my mom what we were. “Well,” she said, “on Dad’s side, his dad was German and his mom is Scottish. And on my side Grandma and Grandpa were French.”

“Who are you?”

**“On my dad’s side I am German and Scottish. On my mom’s side I am French. ”
At least that’s what they told me.**

There are French roots on my Métis side and my great grandparents spoke French. French was preferable to Indian because to be French is to be on the white side, the dominant side. We receive messages loud and clear both on what is said and on what is not said. “We fashion our identities by piecing together all the verbal and nonverbal messages we receive from others” (Miller Marsh & Turner-Vorbeck, 2010, p. 2). Although it was never said, the implicit message that I received was, do not talk about the Cree side. Yet, I always wanted to speak Cree.

I would ask my mom to teach me Cree, but my mom could not teach me because she only knew “a little bit of Cree.” At least that’s what she would say when I asked. My grandma would come over and visit and they would sit in the living room, drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes. I would play quietly on the floor with coloring books, buttons, or paper dolls. When they wanted to say something they did not want me

to hear, they would speak in Cree. I would listen very closely because some words have no Cree word. I would listen for the English words that would be mixed in, usually just names of people or places or odd words and I would try to figure out what they were talking about. They also used to whisper loudly to each other when they were talking about someone, as if that person could hear them. Usually they would start talking about someone and they would start to whisper and then they would start whispering in Cree. It sounded beautiful to me.

“Who are you?”

“Well I’m French. But we don’t speak French, we speak Cree.”

At least that’s what they told me.

Many years later, as an adult, I asked my mother why she did not teach me Cree. She said, “Because it was not an advantage.” I would agree that, at that time, she was right. Identifying with the dominant culture has privileges and advantages. The higher up in social institutions, the more people you find from the dominant culture. Logic would dictate that if you want to be in a position of power within any institution, it would be easier to attain if you were a member of the dominant culture. It benefits me to identify myself as white and if I spoke Cree it would be harder to identify as white. I have lost the language of my people, my birthright, because to speak it is a disadvantage. I am not the only one. Ukrainian, German, Spanish, Italian, many of these languages in Canada are lost to the younger generation. I am reminded of the melting pot theory. Who would believe that we could take all cultures, all languages and melt them down and out of this mass would come white, English culture. Why would we ever believe that this was a good thing?

Here You Are This

What if your reflection changed from place to place? In one place your reflection was this and in another place it was something else and in another place something else? Place matters. “In addition to ethnic identity, the racial composition of the neighborhood, peer group, cohabiting family members, and school all had significant impacts on racial identification” (Herman, 2004, p. 744). My hometown was a unique place in many respects. The community was in the far north, only accessible by plane, boat, and a road in the winter. It was a large community of about 4,000 people. I recall many people in the community, of my parents’ age, being new Canadians. People came from provinces throughout Canada as well as other countries. The largely outnumbered local population consisted of Métis families, like my mother’s, as well as some Dene and Cree families. My family was quite well known in the community. My father was the

mayor for a couple of years and a member of the Knights of Columbus. Although my mother is Métis and looks Indian, no one ever treated my mother like an Indian. From my perspective, racial identity was ignored. It was a non-issue and I did not see racism when I was growing up.

My sixth birthday party was special. I was in school by then so I could invite friends from school. Birthday parties in my day were simple affairs. Parties were held in your home. You ate cake and ice cream. You opened presents. You played games with your friends and after a few hours your friends went home. I have a picture taken at my sixth birthday party. I am sitting around the table with all of my friends with the birthday cake in front of me. The candles are lit and if I listen closely enough I can hear my friends singing Happy Birthday. In a few moments my mother will cut the cake. My greatest wish at that moment was that I would be lucky and I would find in my piece of cake a coin wrapped in foil. I am dressed like all of the other little girls in a short red party dress. My hair is styled, like my friends, in two pony tails at either side of my head. As I look at the picture, I realize that all of my friends in this picture are white.

“Who are you?”

“I am a proud Cree Indian but I speak English and have many white friends.”

At least that’s what they told me.

I feel very fortunate, in many ways, to have grown up in this environment. I had only positive feelings about being Indian because I was never subjected to racism. I did not know that Indian people could be treated differently. Ironically, I was proud to be Indian because I was not treated like an Indian.

But Here You Are This

My hometown was based on one industry: mining. When the price of uranium plummeted, the mine closed and people packed up and left. We moved to the city the summer before I started Grade 10. In the city no one knew me or my family. In the city I was treated much the same way as I had always been treated. I do not look Indian, but my mom does. “There are different challenges for those Aboriginal people who are visibility identifiably Aboriginal and those who are not” (St. Denis, 2007, p. 1083).

On a Sunday, during the summer before I was to start school, my mom and I spent the morning at the Bay in downtown Saskatoon. On the second floor was a beauty salon where my mother got her hair cut and styled. We lingered through the store,

picking up a few things on our way out. I remember it was quite busy and when it came time to pay we ended up in a long lineup. The teller was a young lady, in her early twenties, who was exceptionally friendly. She began each transaction with a cheerful, "Good afternoon. Will that be cash or will you be putting that on your Bay card today?" This was followed with many smiles and general conversation as she rang in the purchases. Waiting in line I commented, in my teenage vernacular, on how friendly and perky the teller was, "Someone had their happy pills today." My mother replied that the Bay takes customer service very seriously and it was something that was always stressed when she worked at the Bay in our hometown. I wandered a few feet away to look at something that had caught my eye as my mother stepped up and placed her purchases on the counter. The teller's behavior instantly changed. There was no smile and in fact there were no words at all. She barely glanced at my mother and throughout the whole interaction, she looked above or below or beside my mother, as if just looking at my mother was somehow painful. I was shocked. It felt like someone had punched me in the gut and then pulled out my heart. She was treating my mother this way because she looked Indian. This was so blatantly obvious to me, yet hard to understand. I had never seen anyone treat my mother this way and it forced me to look at my mother through a new lens. I hung back, rooted to the floor, unable to move forward. After ringing in the purchases, the teller, dryly without looking at my mom said, "\$18.45." My mom purposefully placed her purse on top of the counter, opened her purse, took out her wallet, took out her Bay card and said, "I would like to put that on my Bay card." The young teller rolled her eyes, snorted, and said rather disgustingly, "You need to tell me before I total your purchases if you are using your Bay card. I have already rung it in." To which my mother replied, "I worked at the Bay for many years and I know this. You asked everyone in line before me if they wanted to pay cash or put it on their Bay card, but you didn't ask me. You didn't say anything to me. So now you will have to do an override." She was making a point and she said this in a respectful manner. But in the end, it seemed to matter little. The young lady, oblivious to her own racial prejudice, merely rolled her eyes and began pushing buttons. The people in line behind my mother also huffed, rolled their eyes, and looked generally disgusted at my mother. You could read their thoughts, "Crazy lady, troublemaker, quack..."

"Who are you?"

"I am Indian. Like my mother."

At least that's what I told me.

Prejudice and racism are strange things. White people will often say that they do not see any racism, yet Indian people will often say that they see a great deal of racism. Our perception is based on our lens. Perhaps you can only see racism when you have been on the receiving end of racist behavior and have felt what that feels like. I do not believe that most people are intentionally racist. Our actions stem from our beliefs: people are only reflecting what they have been taught in their families, in their schools and in their community. We can change racist behavior by changing beliefs in our communities, in our schools, and in our families.

I am Indian and I am white, yet often I am forced to choose. In talking about this choice Poston (1990) had this to say, "Individuals at this stage are pushed to choose an identity, usually of one ethnic group. This can be a time of crisis and alienation for the individual" (p. 153). I am not sure if it is a true choice because I cannot be one without the other. I am Indian and I am white. I am both. At different times, in different places and with different people, I may feel more connected to one side but both sides are always there. I do not think that I could cut out half of who I am. I can only be both.

No Really....Who Are You?

I started this paper talking about wanting to create balance. I struggle because although I see both sides of me reflected as one, many people see only one side reflected. No matter what I tell myself, it is hard to get away from what other people reflect. People see me as white or Indian, but not both. I prefer the idea of a third space.

A third space offers a place where hybridity, or being mixed-race, can be experienced holistically and celebrated as central to Métis culture. A third space offers an escape from Cartesian duality and polarized thinking, from being stuck between being a White person with some Indian blood or a Native person with some white ancestors. (Richardson, 2006, p. 66)

I think I see myself in that third space when I just am. When I am not asked to choose and when I do not have to think about it. Then I am one. Perhaps one day others will see me as this way too.

Who are you?

I am a German, Scottish, Cree, Métis, Indian woman.

I am not one or more of any of these.

One day this is what they will tell me.

What Did They Tell You at School?

Through this reflective learning journey, I have come to understand that identity formation can be complex and difficult. During my years in school there was little that acknowledged the Indian side of my identity. The only time that I can recall when Indian people were even mentioned was in Grade 4 when we did a unit of study on Plains Indians. The fact that this is the only memory that stands out speaks volumes. Although the history and culture of Indian people was largely ignored, I was fortunate that my family and my community affirmed my ethnicity in a positive manner. For children who do not have a positive family or community connection, it is crucial that schools affirm children's identity with positive messages if children are to grow up proud of who they are. I wish there had been more Indian content included in the curriculum when I was in school and I wonder what effect this would have had on my identity.

I have observed positive changes in schools since I was a student. Many school divisions have dedicated resources and personnel to ensure that Indian perspectives, history, and culture are included in programming, and there is a growing understanding that this First Nations, Métis, and Inuit content should be a golden thread that is woven into everything we do in school. Professional development opportunities offer educators opportunities to learn First Nation worldviews and perspectives. Within the school environment, educators are able to build positive images of Indian people and, in this way, influence the beliefs through which children see Indian people. I was recently in a Grade 1 classroom in which the teacher had worked very intentionally to weave Indian content throughout and within the entire curriculum. The children were engaged in a class discussion regarding stewardship of the earth and environmental concerns and issues. As I sat there, a small girl spoke very eloquently and respectfully about Indian people. To hear this child speak in such a knowledgeable, respectful manner about Indian people filled my heart with joy. If we continue to intentionally include multiple perspectives in our curriculum then perhaps all future generations will grow up with a positive sense of themselves and who they are.

Who are you?

I am me and that is wonderful!

At least that's what they told me.

Epilogue

My husband is a status Indian and a member of the Wahpeton Band. Our three sons are status Indians and members of the Wahpeton band. Because of the way in which Indian status and band membership is legislated federally, my grandson does not have any Indian status and he is not a member of the Wahpeton band. If they take away your status and your band membership, what does that do to your identity?

“So your father was treaty and your grandpa and your great grandpa were treaty but you are not treaty?”

“Yes”

“But what about the grass growing and the rivers flowing!”

I know, but this is what they told me.



Fig. 1: My grandson dancing with Grandpa at the thanksgiving Pow Wow in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, Canada, in 2013. What will he answer when someone asks, “Who are you?”

Note

1. Stated in the Declaration of Treaty 6, 7, and 8 First Nations, guaranteeing that the promises between First Nations and non-First Nations people would be honoured “as long as the sun shines, rivers flow and the grass grows.” (http://www.treatycouncil.org/PDF/Treaty_Rights_and_Health_Resolution.pdf)

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Relatedness-Supportive Learning Environment for Girls in Physical Education

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ABSTRACT

The challenges and issues associated with girls' disengagement from high school physical education are serious and long standing. This disengagement has provided the impetus for the examination of alternative strategies to facilitate girls' engagement in physical education. The purpose of this paper is to share a range of gender-inclusive practices in physical education grounded in the concept of a relatedness-supportive learning environment. "Relatedness" is the feeling of being connected to others in a social context. In turn, "relatedness support" refers to the social environments in which individuals have the opportunity to develop healthy relationships with others.

Introduction

Research in physical education (PE) classrooms suggests that students' social interactions and involvement are pedagogical goals that enhance learning. These goals suggest a connection between the teacher's ability to create a learning environment that emphasizes students' social interactions and the enhancement of students' individual and social growth. This paper considers adolescent girls' need for a sense of relatedness in physical education and shares a range of gender-inclusive practices grounded in the concept of a relatedness-supportive learning environment. Relatedness is a concept drawn from self-determination theory of motivation.

This paper represents a synergy of two of my ongoing areas of research. The first area has focused on descriptive research to better understand the experiences of girls and young women in physical education (e.g., Gibbons, Wharf Higgins, Gaul, & Van Gyn, 1999; Gibbons & Humbert, 2008), and program-effectiveness research involving the development and implementation of alternative PE programs designed to meet the needs of female students (e.g., Gibbons & Gaul, 2004; Gibbons, 2009). Most recently we utilized Deci's and Ryan's (1985, 2000) self-determination theory [SDT] of motivation as the theoretical framework to analyze and adapt curriculum and teaching practices in PE to increase support the participation of female students (Gibbons, Humbert, & Temple, 2010). The second research area has explored the systematic implementation of team-building activities in physical education and their impact on a range of affective outcomes including self-concept, perceptions of competence, and social regard (e.g., Ebbeck & Gibbons, 1998; Gibbons, Ebbeck, Conception, & Li, 2010; Gibbons & Ebbeck, 2011). A notable result of these interventions has been significant positive impact on female participants in particular. This paper merges these two research areas by situating the recurring concept of meeting girls' need for a sense of relatedness in PE as the major focus.

Girls' Involvement in Physical Education

Girls' disengagement from high school physical education (PE) has been well documented (Azzarito, Solmon, & Harrison, 2006; Camacho-Minano, LaVoi, & Barr-Anderson, 2011; Flintoff & Scraton, 2001; Olafson, 2002; van Daalen, 2005). In Canada for example, Gibbons and her colleagues (1999) reported that tenth grade girls described their PE experience as boring and repetitive, and they planned to leave PE as soon as the option became available. This disengagement has provided the impetus for the examination of alternative curricula to facilitate girls' engagement in PE, and the exploration of the type of learning environment preferred by girls. From the alternative curriculum perspective, several studies (Felton et al., 2005; Jamner, Spruit-Metz, Bassin, & Cooper, 2004; Lubans et al., 2012; Webber et al., 2008) reported positive results from PE interventions designed specifically to accommodate the learning needs of adolescent girls. For example, Felton et al. (2005) reported positive changes in girls' physical activity levels in their investigation of the Lifestyle Education for Activity Program (LEAP). They coined the term "girl-friendly PE" to refer to seven features of the PE component of LEAP: (a) gender separation opportunities in class, (b) noncompetitive activities are offered, (c) lifelong physical activity is emphasized, (d) students are physically active in class, (e) classes are fun and enjoyable, (f) behavioral skills for PE are taught, and (g) appropriate instructional methods (including smalls groups) are used (Felton et al., 2005). In Canada, several studies (Gibbons, 2009; Gibbons & Gaul, 2004)

found that girls would enroll and willingly participate in senior elective PE courses if the courses incorporated similar features to those highlighted in girl-friendly PE. For example, Gibbons and Gaul (2004) found that the girls placed considerable significance on the opportunity to have an active role in the planning process, choice of physical activities, and a socially supportive learning environment.

This research on alternative physical education curricula to meet the needs of girls is situated within the broader discussion of innovative models for curriculum and pedagogy. A range of contemporary models (e.g., sport education, personal and social responsibility, cooperative learning) have been developed in order to better address the increasingly diverse needs of students and those goals in physical education that extend beyond the learning of movement skills (Dowler, 2012; Dyson & Casey, 2012; Gordon, 2010; Grenier & Yeaton, 2012; Hellison & Martinek, 2006; Pascual et al., 2011; Ullrich-French, McDonough, & Smith, 2012). The relatedness-supportive learning environment in this paper takes a similar focus on personal and social development.

From the learning environment perspective, researchers (e.g., Gano-Overway, 2013; Hills, 2007; Hurtes, 2002; Leversen, Danielsen, Wold, & Samdal, 2012) have highlighted the centrality of relational development to girls' learning in physical education and identified some notable gender differences. In their examination of social interaction preferences for learning in PE among secondary students, Ruiz, Graupera, Moreno, and Rico (2010) found that girls preferred a learning environment that emphasized cooperation and affiliation, compared to the boys' preference for competition and individual achievement. For girls, to win or lose was not their principal motivation for learning in PE classes. Girls preferred more social interactions and to help others to participate in tasks (Ruiz et al., 2010). The researchers concluded that boys and girls preferred to learn within these different social structures and they preferred different kinds of interactions. According to Hills (2006, 2007), girls give more emphasis than boys to social relationships in PE and try to include everyone. Similarly, Leversen et al. (2012) reported that regardless of the physical activity, girls were more conscious of their social needs than their male counterparts.

Relatedness Research in Physical Education

Self-determination theory describes how motivation develops and its influence on behaviour. First, there are three innate psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—that determine the state of motivation an individual will display (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2002, 2007). If an individual's need for autonomy (having a sense of choice), competence (a sense of efficacy), and relatedness (sense of

social attachment) are met, they will be intrinsically motivated to engage in certain behaviour. In turn, an individual's state of motivation influences behaviour, affect, and cognition. Researchers have found the self-determination theory (SDT) of motivation to be particularly helpful in understanding overall student involvement in PE (Bryan & Solmon, 2007; Sun & Chen, 2010; van den Berghe, Vansteenkiste, Cardon, Kirk, & Haerens, 2012).

Collectively, research on the three innate psychological needs has demonstrated the importance of students' perceptions of a mastery climate, autonomy support, and choice to their feelings of competence and autonomy in physical education (Rutten, Boen, & Seghers, 2012; Shen, McCaughtry, Martin, & Fahlman, 2009; Standage, Duda, & Ntoumanis, 2003, 2005, 2006; Sun & Shen, 2010; van den Berghe et al., 2012). Compared to the concepts of autonomy and competence, there has been far less research emphasis on the factors most likely to help students feel socially related during their physical education classes. "Relatedness" is defined as the feeling of being in relation to others in a social context (Ryan & Deci, 2002). "Relatedness support" refers to the social environments in which individuals have the opportunity to develop inspiring relationships with others (Cox, Duncheon, & McDavid, 2009; Ullrich-French et al., 2012). Despite this lack of research attention, Cox and Williams (2008) suggest that the identification of factors that may support students' feelings of relatedness is particularly important, as studies have demonstrated that feeling socially connected can be a stronger predictor of self-determined motivation than feelings of competence or autonomy in physical education.

Several researchers (Eime et al., 2013; Ntoumanis, 2001, 2005; Pfaeffli & Gibbons, 2010; Sammet, 2010; Shen, McCaughtry, Martin, Fahlman, & Garn, 2010) have highlighted the need for relatedness as particularly important for girls, and that social relationships play an important role in their participation (Hills, 2007). Shen et al. (2012) suggest that "a sense of relatedness is one of the key self-system processes that individuals develop over time in response to interactions with the social context" (p. 214). In their examination of the experiences of adolescent girls in PE, Shen and his colleagues found that girls with a high sense of relatedness were more likely to show enthusiastic participation and effort in PE class. As well, they noted that female students' feelings of relatedness to their teachers was found to be a significant predictor of their level of engagement in PE class. Specifically, those girls who felt "important and appreciated by their teachers were more likely to report that their involvement in physical activities were interesting and fun and they felt happy and comfortable in physical education" (p. 241). The importance of supportive relationships with peers in PE class was also found to modify the effects of relatedness to teachers. In particular, girls with low feelings of

relatedness to their teachers were significantly more involved in PE if they felt accepted by their peers.

In their examination of a senior PE course tailored to meet the needs and interests of adolescent girls, Pfaeffli and Gibbons (2010) found that the girls emphasized the sense of connection they felt in an all-girls' course, expressing the importance of participating with friends, making new friends, and feeling safe. These authors suggest that for many girls, their relatedness is clearly tied to their willingness to positively engage in PE class. They further propose that without the sense relatedness and support, it appears unlikely that girls will sufficiently let their guard down to get involved in PE.

In their comprehensive review, Weiss and Stuntz (2004) emphasized the potential for the physical education context as a medium for improving peer relationships. They suggested that examining instructional activities that focus on communication, collaboration, and problem solving offer promise in enhancing peer relationships through emphasis on group trust and social support. As well, recent research (e.g., Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Sproule et al., 2013; Ullrich-French, McDonough, & Smith, 2012) emphasizes the need to explore the instructional processes that contribute to social connectedness. With this in mind, the following section presents a wide array of actions for teachers that may enhance a relatedness-supportive environment in PE that will contribute directly to girls' positive involvement.

Relatedness-Supportive Learning Environment: Suggestions for Action

Whereas many researchers emphasize female students' need for a sense of relatedness in their physical education class, few have provided practical suggestions for teachers beyond brief generalities. For example, Niemiec and Ryan (2009) stated their suggestions for applying relatedness-supportive strategies in the classroom in one short sentence: "strategies for enhancing relatedness include conveying warmth, caring, and respect for students" (p. 141). Similarly, in their discussion of implications for practice, Shen et al. (2012) advise teachers to exhibit the qualities of "warmth, caring, sensitivity, dedication of attention and time, and emotional availability"(p. 243) as suggested strategies to enhance relatedness in their PE classes. The purpose of this section is to provide specific, practical, and theoretically grounded actions for teachers to implement to enhance the potential for creating a relatedness-supportive learning environment in their PE classrooms. The following table is presented in two sections. The first section, "Community building inside the PE classroom," includes actions to help teachers develop supportive and respectful relationships with their students, and actions to help students develop positive relationships with their PE classmates.

Actions in this first section include curricular content such as team-building and cooperative games, along with a range of organizational strategies, behavioural expectations, and student-centered assessment ideas. In each case, the focus is on helping students interact in a respectful and supportive manner while they are in physical education class. The second section, “Taking PE to the community,” includes suggested actions to extend the sense of relatedness beyond the PE classroom, and strengthen the potential for students’ long-term engagement in physical activity once their experience in PE ends. Students are encouraged to socially engage in physical activity outside physical education. Actions in this second section include involvement in community physical activity events as either participants or volunteers; service learning; and exploration of community recreation facilities.

Table 1***Relatedness-Supportive Actions for Teachers***

1. Community building inside the PE classroom
<p>Include cooperative games and team-building activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intersperse team-building and/or cooperative games throughout the term • Explicitly emphasize the major team-building concepts when using team-building activities (e.g., trust, cooperation, communication, risk) • Include game-creation activities (e.g., invent-a-game) <p>Learn about self and others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn the names of your students as quickly as possible, welcome them into the class • Help students develop connections with classmates: know names of classmates; icebreakers, etc. • Use journals for student self-reflection on what they are learning about themselves as a physical activity participant (e.g., what I am proud of, where I want to improve) • Use a rotating tournament ladder throughout the semester; by the end of the semester everyone has worked with everyone else <p>Create a respectful and safe environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set positive tone early in the term (e.g., the BIG messages)—help students feel safe and valued, model the behaviour you expect of your students, reinforce positive behaviour • Include clear and positive expectations for respectful language (e.g., no swearing, no put-downs) • Use and encourage inclusive language, address stereotypic language (e.g., girls’ pushups) • Create behavioural rubrics together with students (e.g., ask students how to create a safe environment, what can the teacher do, what can the students do?) • Implement a respectful process for choosing partners or groups (e.g., must accept first person who asks, if someone doesn’t have a group invite them into your group)

Table 1

Relatedness-Supportive Actions for Teachers (cont.)

- Utilize a variety of ways for grouping to help students feel comfortable/safe (e.g., all bright shirts together, start with peer/friend groups first, then mix it up once students are already in activity)
- Explicitly address issues such as bullying, harassment, verbal and physical abuse with specific expectations and consequences
- Include self-defense / personal protection in your PE program
- Regularly recognize students for their positive contributions (e.g., “student of the day”)
- At end of semester, hand out sheets with name of all students in class. Students write positive comment about each of her/his classmates. Each student gets his/her sheet with everyone’s positive comments.
- Be aware of the expectations of different cultures represented in your PE class with respect to the roles of females and males (including physical activity expectations)
- Ask students what they need to feel comfortable/safe in change room (e.g., written questionnaire)
- Ensure there are privacy options for change rooms (e.g., private change stalls)
- Allow sufficient time to shower and change so students can go to their next class

Include learning outcomes that focus on fair play

- Have explicit expectations of positive sporting behaviour for game play
- Involve students in establishing acceptable behaviour for game play (e.g., what is acceptable, what is not acceptable; what it means to be a good sport)
- Explicitly highlight positive behaviour to motivate students to act appropriately (e.g., freeze game and highlight the behaviour)
- Use journals for student self-reflection on their own effort and behaviour toward others (e.g., did I try my hardest, did I cheer my classmates)
- Teach the etiquette associated with different activities (e.g., martial arts etiquette, dance etiquette)
- Utilize teaching strategies to increase team play (e.g., number of passes before scoring, points for team work)
- Provide opportunities for students to develop and practice their skills as game officials (e.g., referee, scorekeeping, line judge)

Encourage and assess aspects of social responsibility

- Include an expectation of daily in-class social responsibility (e.g., help with equipment, be on time, helping others)
- Use a daily BEAP rubric: behaviour, effort, attitude, participation

Provide opportunities for students to learn from each other

- Use peer tutoring, peer teaching, peer assessment
- Utilize collaborative learning activities (e.g., create a dance, gymnastics routines)
- Use group warm-up / cool-down routine (e.g., circle stretching)
- Use small-sided games (where applicable) to increase student involvement
- Maximize use of equipment to increase practice opportunity (e.g., one ball per pair)

Table 1***Relatedness-Supportive Actions for Teachers (cont.)***

- Provide opportunities for students to bring and share their interests/expertise with the group (their own, family members', etc.)
- In co-ed classes/units, use females and males as co-leaders

Use a variety of motivational strategies

- Include motivational techniques to build and maintain "fun factor/excitement" (e.g., novelty trophies/prizes, pick games from a hat, fun warm-up games)
- Include some physical activities where everyone is at the same level (all beginners) (e.g., Tai Chi may be new to everyone)
- Incorporate novelty activities for change of pace (e.g., rubber chicken games, cup stacking, playground games)
- Utilize the natural environment for physical activity (e.g., parks, trails)

2. Taking PE to the community (outside the classroom)**Involve students in volunteer activities (in school and out of school)**

- Involve students in administration of house leagues, intramurals, clubs, etc.
- Participate in community events (e.g., Terry Fox Run, Run for the Cure, Green Earth Day)
- Participate as a volunteer in community events (e.g., work at a water station in a community run)
- Involve students in school-wide events that complement PE (e.g., Wellness Week organized by students)

Include social action projects

- Have a class project each term. Each class designs something it wants to contribute to the community (focus on physical activity) (e.g., run to the local park and pick up trash, walk with students at local pre-school to the playground and play some games)

Explore physical activity opportunities in the community

- Use community recreation centre programs, fitness centres, outdoor recreation areas (e.g., parks, skateboard areas)
- Use community mapping exercise (e.g., find out where community physical activities are, what is offered, cost)
- Include familiarity tours of community facilities (rinks, pools). Students want to feel comfortable that they know what they are doing

Summary

I have provided a range of suggestions into where and how to target pedagogical practices in physical education to better achieve the learning outcomes for female students, a group who's needs have been underserved. These practices are grounded in female students' need for relatedness, a concept associated with self-determination theory of motivation. The concept of relatedness with its relationship to motivation and subsequent impact on aspects of participation is valuable in helping to better understand the general PE learning environment. Given this theoretical backdrop and growing evidence base, there would appear to be a sound rationale for teachers to implement relatedness-supportive teaching strategies. Continuing to develop a comprehensive understanding of and response to adolescent girls' needs allows us to create the best possible learning environment through which physical education learning outcomes can be achieved.

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Inclusion's Historical Entanglements in Alberta

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ABSTRACT

Inclusive education in Alberta is entangled in a long, dark history of exclusion. Hermeneutics can help illuminate and interrupt this entanglement in order to ask what might be taken for granted within it. Our notions of inclusion could be interpreted as suffering from an inability to recognize what is still historically at play, especially in the case of students diagnosed with emotional and behavioural disabilities. Seeing and understanding this through a hermeneutic sense of historical inquiry and play can help us move towards socially just school systems for children and youth.

An Anecdote: Danielle

Danielle and her family had recently arrived from the Caribbean. She was an elementary school student in a multi-grade series of open classrooms. Her school team claimed she had high anxiety as well as attention and hyperactivity issues. As a consultant for one of Canada's largest urban school boards, my role was to support school teams struggling with students presenting with mental health problems. Danielle's school team had asked for my support. Upon arrival at the school, the team shared it believed Danielle needed to be placed in a special education classroom. Part of my work entailed serving as a gatekeeper to special education or exceptional settings.

In this school every student in grades 4, 5, and 6 gathered together in a double open classroom for the morning's agenda and introduction to the topics of the day. The teachers planned together and, depending on the topic, flexibly grouped students

throughout the day, according to student needs. The school was known for its inquiry work, based on the Galileo Educational Network (Friesen, 2009). Inquiry is described as "...study into a worthy question...the real work that someone in the community might tackle...involves serious engagement and investigation and the active creation and testing of new knowledge" (Galileo Educational Network, 2014). Inquiry work is often seen as a way for all students to enter curriculum topics because it allows the space for curiosity to emerge and be honoured. In my experiences as a consultant, inquiry-based classrooms tended to be more pedagogically inclusive. I expected, therefore, to see Danielle struggling despite a pedagogically rich learning environment.

That morning I watched as some 80 students assembled into the large double classroom. I was at the back of this long room. There was Danielle too, almost completely separated from the rest of the group. Why was she placed in a location where it would be very difficult for a student with attention issues to pay attention? What conditions had led to this situation? I watched her struggle to hear and listen. As she missed out on the lead teacher's instructions her stress appeared to amplify. She looked bewildered, unsure, and confused. The situation seemed extremely counter-productive for her success. Her physical placement in the classroom seemed counter-productive to learning yet painfully generative of her apparent disability. Disability Studies in Education perspectives would likely describe this situation as an example of the social model of disability (Connor, Gabel, Gallagher, & Morton, 2008). According to this model, social, cultural, and environmental conditions surrounding people shape them as disabled though they themselves are not disabled in and of themselves.

During the rest of that morning I witnessed Danielle being painfully bullied by her peers. I listened to her lash out at their hurtful comments. I struggled to understand how the other teachers did not see this and, if they did, why they did not interject. Danielle sought help throughout the morning. She was usually redirected to join her group. Finally, just before lunch she had an escalated emotional response. Tears streamed down her face as she cried aloud that the boys were being mean to her. Many of them smiled and laughed when this happened. It was shocking to witness. I felt guilt for not intervening earlier. One teacher guided her out of the room and into the hallway.

Soon thereafter, over lunchtime, I shared these observations in much more detail with the teaching and administrative team. They were stunned to know just how persistent the peer bullying was as well as how many times she had asked for help but was redirected. Their response led me to think that the situation was as if Danielle had become invisible in her marginalization and exclusion, yet she was entirely visible as having problems exclusively related to her situation. As was often the case in my work

in so many classrooms throughout K–12 schooling, there was an intense hyper-focus on the problems of the child. This focus seemed to conceal or blind educational teams to how school cultures and educational practices played significant roles in bringing forth or amplifying student sensitivities. Danielle's school team and the majority of her fellow students seemed to have already excluded her from the classroom. She had the problems and therefore she was an outlier who needed help that was beyond their abilities. At the end of the noon-hour meeting, Danielle's school team committed to making significant changes and invited me to return in several weeks time.

Three weeks later Danielle sat at the front of the room and was given focussed attention from an educational assistant and teacher. She seemed to need it. Because of that ongoing support, she engaged in learning throughout the morning. It was difficult, intense work for the team but she was included and she seemed happy. This was a very different state of affairs from my first visit. We celebrated their success during our post-observation meeting. We were also realistic about the intense energy needed to support her. There was no suggestion that the team could not support Danielle. I left feeling very hopeful for her future inclusion in that school.

Two weeks later the administrator of the school called me to tell me her team could no longer sustain the level of support it was giving Danielle. The administrator was putting her forward for specialized placement on this basis. There was no longer room for discussion or further planning. I was filled with frustration and anger.

Danielle's situation was much more complex than this paper can describe; however, the barriers to inclusion present in the actions and non-actions of students and educators alike seemed to me to point to the historical weight living in the day-to-day beliefs and practices inherent in many schools in which I had been. I was increasingly frustrated by the presence of a system-wide process that seemed to unnecessarily permit the placement of students into a parallel special education track of schooling. Maybe Danielle needed a smaller and more highly resourced classroom; however, during my initial observations there were no indications that this team—a highly progressive team engaged in inquiry work using a cooperative teaching model—was thinking about the inclusion of all students in their classrooms. Despite my expectations for a pedagogically rich environment, there seemed to be a pedagogy of poverty (Haberman, 1991), at least for Danielle.

Then, even with her new success, the school team's initial hope to place her in another program prevailed. It seemed as if it had simply followed the protocol for trying to be inclusive—accessing my supports and following through with them—but then

claimed it was too hard to sustain. Perhaps it was too hard. Yet my second observation led me to believe it had the personnel to provide the kinds of support she needed, especially through its flexible groupings.

This reminded me of how I often felt that, at the critical and difficult point of having to be inclusive in pedagogical practices and supports, educational teams did not have the will to persevere in the face of this often complicated and intense work. A narrow focus on the problems of the student prevented us from talking about pedagogical practices. We could talk about strategies for the disabilities diagnosed or presumed, but talking about teaching itself was not what teams had gathered together for. Likewise, the everyday business of carrying on with curriculum demands and administrative duties, for example, overrode the need to slow classroom life down enough to help students understand and work well with one another, including students who present with more sensitivities than most in educational environments. More importantly and sadly, we could not begin to talk about how we teach in classrooms.

There was more at play here, too. Danielle's educational circumstances did not arise *ex nihilo*—out of nowhere. A historical lineage lived within and was inherent in these present-day phenomena. What prejudices belies our best-of-intentions belief that students like Danielle need specialized settings “for their own good?”

Danielle's anecdote is a powerful example of how, despite the ubiquitous talk of inclusion in Alberta and other provinces, a prejudiced and taken-for-granted way of thinking and being with students can be counter-productive to the social justice values of a truly inclusive educational system. In a much more sweeping and admittedly simplified sense, inclusion today is deeply entangled with special education's discourse (Gilham & Williamson, 2013). Further yet, special education has deep historical ties to normalization (Gilham, 2012). Inclusion today continues to reinforce a normal/abnormal dualism evidenced in the prolific and common language of disability and/or exceptionality (Valle & Conner, 2011). One of my main hopes for this paper is to enliven Slee's (2011) claim that inclusion in Western education is a form of neo-special education; we should be aware of this in order to be and do differently for and with students.

Hermeneutics can help us see this entanglement of the past with the present. Historical inquiry can serve an emancipatory function (Gadamer, Dutt, & Palmer, 2001). In the remainder of this paper, I attempt to loosen the notion of inclusion from the prejudices inherent in it by revealing its dark connections to the past. In bringing these connections to light, we may be more mindfully aware of how popular educational

discourses claim to address equity for all, yet might actually remain counter-productive to those very claims.

The Emotional-Behavioural Disability (EBD) Crisis in Schools

Danielle's anecdote enlivens the following snippets of current statistics. For example, in Alberta students diagnosed with EBD are more likely to not complete high school (Alberta Education, 2008). Some other examples include:

- According to Gulchak and Lopes, over the past 20 years there has been a phenomenal rise in the numbers of students diagnosed with EBD in the western world (as cited in Winzer, 2009).
- In Alberta, for the 2011/2012 school year there were approximately 8,000 K–12 students diagnosed with severe EBD. Another 4,200 students were categorized as having a mild/moderate EBD. In all, more than 12,000 students or 2% of Alberta's total school population were categorized as having an EBD (Alberta Education, 2010).
- According to Alberta Education, 25% of all severe and mild/moderate codes do not complete high school after three years. This number jumps to 50.9% after four years (Alberta Education, 2010). Since students with EBD are included within this overall category of high school non-completers, it seems safe to assume that the high school completion rate of these students is comparable. There is no publicly available data on the high school completion rate of students with EBD; however, in a 2012 telephone interview with an Alberta Education employee assigned to the High School Completion Study (2010), it was shared that only 37% of students with EBD complete high school. This number, it was stated, "is the lowest high school completion rate of any disability in Alberta" (personal communication, February 29, 2012). Generously interpreted, only 4 out of 10 students within this category of diagnosis completed high school.
- At the same time, teachers are more likely to be opposed to working with students with EBD in classrooms (Cook, 2001). According to Eber, Nelson, and Miles, students labelled with EBD are the most underserved and last to be considered for inclusive settings (as cited in Winzer, 2009).
- For students diagnosed with EBD the alternatives to high school completion are poor health, unemployment, and significantly lower incomes (Canada, 2011; Versnel, DeLuca, Hutchinson, Hill, & Chin, 2011).
- Canadian data connects students with severe EBD and offender populations (Corrado & Freedman, 2011).

This data points to a crisis in schooling for students identified as having EBD. Despite more than 25 years of special education supports and services, students with EBD were most likely not completing high school. What light does the history of schooling in Alberta shed on the story of Danielle and this crisis of school failure?

Modern Schooling and Social Harmony: Inclusion's Older Story

Despite schooling having official status in Alberta in 1905 (Dechant, 2006), it was not until the 1960s that schooling for the disabled was more comprehensively offered in public schools (Jahnukainen, 2011). Only since the arrival of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in the 1980s was there a legal impetus for providing schooling for all students (Alberta Teachers Association, 2002). There were massive increases in students identified as "exceptional" during the post-Charter years (Winzer & Mazurek, 2011).

The history of public schooling in Alberta is largely seen as a movement that tried to bring about social harmony (Prentice, 2004), or provincial stability (Dechant, 2006) through "good character" training (von Heyking, 2006). Rapid industrialization and urbanization, as well as immigration, resulted in severe social class divisions (Prentice, 2004) and increased demands for education for children and youth (von Heyking, 2006). Children and youth who were not in schools either worked at home, in factories, or odd jobs, or they roamed the streets (McIntosh, 1999). Schools mainly had an academic focus and there was an intense stress on social efficiency, harmony, and "good character." Some of this focus resulted in severe methods of discipline in schools like the frequent use of "the rod."

The father of "free" or public schooling in Canada, Ontario's Egerton Ryerson (1803-1882), wanted to bring about a peaceful society by unifying the widening social classes (Prentice, 2004) that had occurred mainly due to rapid industrialization and urbanization. He believed through education there would be an increase in economic production from the poor, reflecting the prevailing belief of the day that they were unproductive because of laziness. Only a strong Christian values-based education could change that.

Additionally, it was thought that helping the poor might further reinforce what was seen as "sloth and weakness of character" (Dechant, 2006, p. 17). In Alberta there was a strong belief in the individual's responsibility (Dechant, 2006; von Heyking, 2006). In the movement to bring education to the masses, there was the belief that "unschooled vagrant children" (Prentice, 2006) needed to be shaped—often through punishment—and that "schools would conquer lower class apathy for the good of all" (p. 134).

Massive schooling for the general population of children and youth was itself a new phenomenon. Prior to modern urban life, children and youth were often seen and treated as adults. They worked to support their family businesses, so common prior to industrialization (McIntosh, 1999). In Alberta's first few decades of modern schooling, many school-aged children were needed on their family farms. Few students progressed to secondary schools (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2002). With the loss of close-knit communities of manufacture and trade, urban children and youth either worked in large factories or on the streets (McIntosh, 1999). Many engaged in criminal behaviour (Dechant, 2006). Society started to view the child as dependent and immature. They needed "saving" through stronger guidance and learning so they could contribute to a modern and increasingly urban society (McIntosh, 1999; Prentice, 2004).

Reflecting on the above in the light of our current calls for inclusion, could modern schooling be seen as a response to the changed beliefs about the nature of the child? Those beliefs about children were shaped by the drastically transformed world of the time and the realities that came to bear on families and cities (McIntosh, 1999). If the answer is yes, could inclusion also be seen as an ongoing struggle to respond well to the rapid demands placed on society as a consequence of the ongoing whirlwind of modernity? Inclusion might no longer be a current and popular initiative of Alberta Education over the past five years or an important human rights movement of the past 25 years. I suggest we could now interpret inclusion as a larger and more complicated play of events across society and institutions that started with modern schooling.

Neglected and Delinquent

According to Lupart (2008), Albertan students with EBD were not included in early educational services. They were "...abandoned and set adrift in the local communities" (p. 4) and seen as poor, immigrant children who did not work (Lupart, 2008; Dechant, 2006).

These children were quickly stigmatized through a host of labels such as gutter snipe, black arab, waif, stray, and delinquent (Winzer, 2009). Children and youth who suffered were often treated as criminals or they were left to the responsibility of their families (Dechant, 2006). Society became increasingly concerned about youth crime and the social problems it created (Dechant, 2006; Prentice, 2004). According to Lupart (2008), large groups of children ended up in single facilities: "...not much more than human warehouses that were dumping grounds for young children rejected by their families" (p. 4). Dechant (2006) wrote that the delinquency model was based on the prevailing medical model of the day which saw these children and youth's problems as

issues of neglect, abandonment, and “an indigent environment.” Juvenile courts were intended to “identify and root out this sickness” (Dechant, 2006, p. 19). However, this was not the prevailing discourse of that time. Eugenics held the title and it was rooted in the logic of normal/abnormal that persists today in the medico-psycho discourse of special education.

Inclusion for Most: Eugenics

From the Greek meaning “well born,” eugenics was a strongly supported movement in Alberta. Enacted in legislation as the *Sexual Sterilization Act of Alberta*, eugenics was used to sterilize disabled children and youth, primarily (Dechant, 2006). Forced sterilization remained in place as legislation in Alberta from 1921 to 1972. At the time, the government largely interpreted students with severe EBD and other certain disabilities as abnormal and subsequently immoral, which required “careful screening of immigrants and sterilization” and “suitable facilities” (Clarence Hincks, Mental Hygiene Survey of the Province of Alberta 1921, as cited in Dechant, 2006, p. 28).

“Feeble-mindedness” (Dechant, 2006; Lupart, 2008; Osgood, 2005) was a construct of psychology and it formed part of an early progressive education movement; that movement was deeply entrenched in the scientific method and industrialization (von Heyking, 2006). Feeble-mindedness was an official category of human kind derived from mental measurement practices newly introduced into Canada through scholars who had been attending Binet and Simons’ conferences on the development of intelligence testing (see Dudley-Marling & Gurn, 2010 for critiques of the application of the bell curve to individuals, typically and predominantly through intelligence testing). Eugenics was an attempt to breed purity into society while also denying breeding to those deemed abnormal or disabled, particularly the feeble-minded (Dechant, 2006). The practice of sterilization was only recently eliminated from existing national legislation by the Supreme Court of Canada in 1986 (Lupart, 2008), though it was repealed in Alberta in 1972 (Dechant, 2006). Over 60% of those sterilized between 1921 and 1970 were children and youth up to 20 years of age (for a more detailed and disturbing account of this particular history, see Dechant, 2006).

This dark history was supported and espoused as good for society by the Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene (CNCMH). Nellie McClung (1873-1951), popularly known for her advocacy of women’s rights in Alberta, played a pivotal role in supporting the eugenics legislation in Alberta (Dechant, 2006). Her advocacy, along with the support of the committee and other groups, attempted to make a strong link between feeble-mindedness and delinquency (Dechant, 2006).

Hermeneutics and The Art of Strengthening

The art of strengthening requires us to be open to the possibility that others may be right, “that one really considers the weight of the other’s opinion” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 361), which is a call to listening to what our conversations with texts and others say to us (Gadamer et al., 2001). The art of strengthening is the art of listening in order to ask questions of one another and our traditions.

In asking questions one is engaged in the art of thinking (Gadamer, 2004). If this kind of thinking results in interpretations that questions the judgment of a culture and time, perhaps such interpretations shed light on our current practices. The situational nature of human life includes the pre-judgments or pre-givens within a society. These prejudices constitute whom we are and are embedded in us through our cultural practices. Put differently, our practices are informed by tradition. Pre-judgments can be deemed as positive or negative within a given culture. Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) restored the term prejudices to this meaning, thereby giving them a fundamental and necessary place in how we think about and see our world.

Thus, we do not stand behind or above, or over the lives we are already living (Gadamer et al., 2001). We live in horizons of understanding that extend to the past, live now in the present, and point towards the future (Gadamer, 2004). We can get a sense of what we are within by trying to understand the past and how we belong to it. This mediated sense does not entail that we fully escape how we are played or historically affected by our traditions. Yet, taking historical account of one’s culture does not “relieve oneself of the duty to disempower, where possible, prejudices that do not prove to be positive” (Gadamer, 2001, p. 43).

The art of strengthening does not imply the strengthening of another’s words so that they are right, but rather seeing one’s position from this mediated, historical sense. In doing so, the possibility emerges for a position to be understandable *in its time*. Past practices have their inheritances too and are often taken for granted. During their time, such practices were therefore seen as right and true. In this way inheritances connect to the present, even though we may have already passed judgment on the wrongs of the past. Hermeneutics reminds us that in the play of history’s influence on our current lives there is a need to make a balanced concession or judgment (Gadamer, 1999) on both the past and the present.

Re-considering the above brief historical inquiry inclusion can be seen to sit within the dark shadow cast by eugenics and similarly minded programming in Alberta. Inclusion takes on a new form in its connection to the past. The shadowy history of not

so long ago places inclusion within a larger horizon: one perhaps not expected in the current day-to-day talk surrounding the topic. The anecdote with Danielle helps to also strengthen our renewed understanding of inclusion by revealing how its dark historical connections underlay the thinking we tend to move towards when faced with a student in distress. Danielle's situation points us towards what has been inherited and taken for granted, I suggest. She's got the problem. She's abnormal. The specialized setting she needs to go to is for her own good.

This is why hermeneutic work entails both historical inquiry and the phenomenon we face everyday. Seeing what we take for granted is a form of interruption. When our prejudices (remember, pre-judgments) are interrupted, possibility arises. The art of strengthening has helped inclusion become readable or interpretable outside of a singularly dominating discourse like special education.

Hermeneutic "Play" and Inclusion

If our prejudices are not interrupted, we can be taken in by our histories. These histories have the character of "play" (Gadamer, 2004). Those within the play of history are being played or tried so much so that in that seriousness of play we can lose ourselves to the game at hand. Being engaged in this kind of play is not always a chosen state. This notion of play in hermeneutics is intended to illuminate the ongoing, always present historical nature of knowledge as part of who and how we are.

Play involves the tragic, too. We can learn from suffering. Play can be risky and dangerous. We often use the expression "the play of things" in various instances to describe complicated events that often happen beyond our wanting and doing. This is a most serious renewal of the concept of play. It is inherent in human life (Gadamer, 2004). This is in contrast to a view of human life, including the accumulation of knowledge, as control over or construction of the world (Gadamer, 2004). Play is a reflection of human hope and tragedy. We are finite beings with finite knowledge. The world often outplays us.

The history of children and youth in Alberta, including so many experiences with cases like Danielle, attuned me to the serious topic of the play of inclusion today. During one historical period, the striving to make a peaceful society was played through eugenics and as we all know, that almost outplayed us all in Europe more than 70 years ago. Vestiges of that "othering" action inherent in normalization and eugenics remain in our schools. If one is not normal then one is abnormal. This is not a neutral or positive difference making.

Inclusion Anew

Recognizing this we see that inclusion has become “a reality that surpasses” us in its historical being or entanglements to the past (Gadamer, 2004, p. 109). Now transformed, it has gained a structure that permits a renewal of its possible interpretations. This is how my work became readable or interpretable as something other than just special education and its deficit-ridden, disabling models. Inclusion is connected to and part of something that is “suddenly and as a whole something else” (p. 111). Inclusion is not just the current wish to have all students succeed or thrive in schools: it is also the story of specialized classes and exclusion of students. It is Danielle’s circumstances. It is the high school completion rate, claims of a lack of resources and supports, and also about teaching and learning, and communities of belonging. Inclusion is all of these occasions (Gadamer, 2004) presenting themselves in their concrete and yet interwoven circumstances. Inclusion in this renewed and profoundly important historical sense is at play in Alberta, I suggest.

My hope is that this brief explanation of the play of inclusion is an act that “produces and brings to light what is otherwise constantly hidden and withdrawn” (p. 112) in inclusion today. In particular, my unpacking or interruption of our present-day notions of inclusion can help to reveal what might be at play in cases like Danielle’s. This is why hermeneutics also requires phenomenon to show or reveal what is at play. Without attention to the particular cases before us, dangerous abstractions can occur.

In the abstraction that occurred as a result of a certain belief in technology and progress, common sense was reduced to a mere contingency of the conditions in which eugenics appeared. The “playing field” of eugenics was “set by the nature” of the beliefs inherent to it, “far more...from within...than by what it comes up against” (p. 107). As a result the field of that play was closed: Eugenics was believed to be the true and proper way to human thriving much like we believe neuro-science and genetics are now the true learning sciences. We need to heed deep and critical caution to these approaches, especially when they are so venerated as scientific discourse.

It is now possible to see the mainstreaming movement of the 1980s and the subsequent changes in programming for students with EBD as an extreme though legitimate response to the monstrous program of eugenics and individual isolation from community. As if in recognition of what eugenics implied for education and for Albertan society, there required an immediate and rapid turn from its horrible consequences. I wonder if this history further reveals inclusion’s entanglement as a response to both eugenics and mainstreaming. Could inclusion be an attempt at a wiser, measured, proportionate, and thoughtful response to the needs of all students,

educators, and families? Is inclusion part of a pendulum swing of answers to and within, and of our own historicity?

At the same time, is inclusion part of a desire and hope for society similar to that which fueled the eugenics movement? Is the desire for a peaceful and harmonious society still at play here? Through this inquiry inclusion could be seen as entangled in the very tradition it attempts to be a counter response to. Hermeneutics does not promise clear and distinct answers. Danielle's situation should not be read unambiguously, either.

Conclusion

Inclusion now regains resonances with an older etymology: "c.1600, from Latin *inclusionem* (nominative *inclusio*) "a shutting up, confinement,"" (Etymology Online, 2014). This brief historical inquiry reinforces the argument that what is currently called inclusion in most educational research and government documents is actually continued acts of segregation, integration and/or mainstreaming in and out of a "norm" of schooling (for examples see: Slee, 2011; Thomas & Loxley, 2007; Valle & Connor, 2011). I hope this work has resulted in seeing inclusion as having "an indissoluble connection with its world" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 138), that world for us as historical in its being. What this inquiry has intended to do therefore, is enliven the topic through remembering its entanglement with the past and highlighting that past as it lives through one particular and modern anecdote. Inclusion can now be seen as so much more than the "naïve self-esteem" (Gadamer, 2004) of the presently rationalized and instrumentalized special education discourse. Given the complexity of the topic, it is no wonder we struggle to create an inclusive education system.

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Attending to Highly Sensitive Children in the Classroom

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ABSTRACT

Through the storied experiences of a Highly Sensitive Child (HSC), the author creates a picture of what High Sensitivity is and how it impacts children in the classroom. Discussion focuses on attending to the needs of highly sensitive children, specifically addressing friendship, environment, discipline, stimulation, and reciprocal learning relationships. The author makes visible why it is important to create a classroom life that meets the needs of highly sensitive children and theorizes that, in doing so, the bar for attending to the wellness of all children will be raised. This article begins a conversation about highly sensitive children in the classroom, something not currently being addressed in educational literature.

Introduction

When I speak of Highly Sensitive Children (HSC) (Aron, 2002) I find I am met with one of two responses. The first response is for someone to ask, “What is HSC?” The second response is for someone to question if, or at times assume, I am speaking of a child with a designated special need such as autism or sensory integration dysfunction, which I am not.¹ It has taken me some time to discover how to reply to these inquiries with thoughtfulness. I have found sharing pieces of my experience with my son, Owen, has been most helpful. In this article, I tell the story of how I experienced Owen’s first year at school in Kindergarten and his entrance into a new school in Grade 3. These stories illustrate how high sensitivity presents in children in the classroom. I then work to create an understanding of what high sensitivity is and

how HSC can be honoured in the classroom. My intention by sharing my experiences with having a highly sensitive child is that it may open the door for others to see why attending to HSC in the classroom is so impactful.

Kindergarten

Sick

'I cannot go to school today,'
Said little Peggy Ann McKay.
'I have the measles and the mumps,
A gash, a rash and purple bumps.
My mouth is wet, my throat is dry
I'm going blind in my right eye.
My tonsils are as big as rocks,
I've counted sixteen chicken pox
And there's one more – that's seventeen,
And don't you think my face looks
green?
My leg is cut, my eyes are blue –
It might be instamatic flu.
I cough and sneeze and gasp and choke,
I'm sure that my left leg is broke –
My hip hurts when I move my chin,
My belly button's caving in,

My back is wrenched, my ankle's
sprained,
My 'pendix pains each time it rains.
My nose is cold, my toes are numb,
I have a sliver in my thumb.
My neck is stiff, my spine is weak,
I hardly whisper when I speak.
My tongue is filling up my mouth,
I think my hair is falling out.
My elbow's bent, my spine ain't straight,
My temperature is one-o-eight.
My brain is shrunk, I cannot hear,
There is a hole inside my ear.
I have a hangnail, and my heart is- what?
What's that? What's that you say?
You say today is...Saturday?
G'bye, I'm going out to play!'

(Silverstein, 1974, pp. 58–59)

Looking back on my son, Owen's, start to primary at our local public school I recall it as everything I hoped it would *never* be. I deeply regret that I did not pull him out as soon as I recognized how bad it was for him. Some children, like Shel Silverstein's (1974) Peggy Ann McKay, just do not want to go to school some days. I imagine most people feel that sense of needing a break at some point or other throughout school, or later on in their work life. But with Owen it was different. Not wanting to go to school was a sign of his constant state of emotional distress—and I was very concerned. In a short period of time after starting Kindergarten, Owen grew terrified of his teacher, and later his school, and authority figures in general. He spoke less. He was fearful of asking questions, of making a mistake, or of doing anything that was “not allowed.”

I remember one day, after school, I suggested he climb to the top platform of the play structure. He looked at me and asked, "Is that allowed?" "Yes," I answered, and he said, "How do you know?" And then, unsatisfied with me as the authority on the climbing rules, he chose not to run off and do what I had suggested, just in case I was wrong and it was in fact not allowed. He was very anxious of breaking any rules and "getting in trouble."

His fear of his teacher and of school turned into excessive anxiety, and he began to lose sleep. I worried about him continuously and could not shake the feeling of fear that would envelop me when I dropped him off at school. Nor could I stop thinking about what I should, and could, do about the situation and the changes I was seeing in Owen at home. He developed headaches that would at times be so severe they would escalate to migraines where I would lay him on my bed, a cold cloth on his forehead, curtains drawn, lights turned out, and sit with him while he cried quietly from the pain. Now, when I look back, I think I should have known what was triggering them. It was stress. My little boy was experiencing so much stress at school that his body started to rebel. He was five years old.



Fig. 1: Owen, Age 4

Owen sits at the little table in his bedroom. It's 7 a.m. He has pencil to paper. He's practicing, he tells me. "I need to practice," he says, "I can't get it wrong!" He cries when I tell him he doesn't need to practice his printing before he goes to school. "Yes," he sobs, "I do! I have to do it right!"

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I drop Owen off at his classroom, carefully staying outside as parents have been asked to do—though he still needs help with his shoes. I tend to linger a little after the bell. I have seen some things at home that are causing concern, so I like to peek through the window occasionally to see if I can notice any clues that may help me understand what is happening with Owen. I watch through the window, cautiously, because I feel certain this watching would be unappreciated by the teacher and administration. I drop things off at the office during school hours so I can walk past Owen's classroom and take a peek, and I come early at pick-up times, too.

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Every time I look in at my son I see him, head down, at his place at the table working with pencil to paper. He is not smiling. He does not look happy. It does not appear to me that he is having fun. I feel so sad when I see this time and time again. The room has activity and play items in it but I don't see him using them.

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Owen is standing in the auxiliary room at the sink in his classroom. I am watching through the uncovered section of window looking into the room. I smile at Owen. He looks nervous and hesitates to smile back at me. My mom is with me and we exchange a questioning look. Owen is washing his hands. He taps, with his elbow, an empty glass baby jar. It clacks to the floor and spins. Owen freezes. He starts to tremble in his hands, up his arms, he swallows, eyes wide. He looks at me. I smile. I mouth, "It's okay. Just pick it up." He tentatively steps one foot off of the stool and, as he reaches down, his teacher steps into view. Owen stops mid-motion for a split second. The teacher stoops and picks up the jar, as Owen has stopped his action to do so, and places the jar on the counter. She walks out. No word to Owen. Owen stands, doesn't look at my mom and me, doesn't finish washing his hands, but dries them and turns and walks out. His face is white and blank.

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Owen tells me he hides at recess. It is scary at recess. There is a child that chases him. So he hides. He hid every day for two weeks. No one noticed.

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Owen tells me he is afraid to use the bathroom at school.

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Owen is sprawled out in the sunshine on our living room rug. He is head to head with his little friend, Rae.² Rae is also five years old and in Kindergarten at a different school. I hear Rae chirp to Owen, "I love my teacher. She's so nice." Owen, in a tone I have never heard him use before, replies, "Not my teacher. She's cranky." He pauses in thought and adds, emphatically, "She's cranky every day!"

I picked Owen up at the end of every morning at school. He walked out of his classroom and no longer smiled at me. He walked with his head down and did not want to talk about his day. At home, over time, he grew angrier, more anxious, and sadder. He cried when it was time to go to school and said he did not want to go, until about January, at which time he just stopped talking about it at all. What happened that made him into this sullen and sad little creature who refused to speak to me about his day? By June he was hardly the boy I knew. He was just five years old and he was broken inside. I felt broken inside, too.

I will never forget his first day of Grade 1. I promised him that he was not going to have the same teacher or be in the same classroom this year. Yet, as I walked him into the school I could see him nearly holding his breath, hand squeezed into mine, and head forward. It was once we began our turn down the primary hallway that he audibly let out his breath. He had been afraid, he said later, that I had not told him the truth. School had become a place of stress for him.

It has been three years since Owen was in Kindergarten and still I find it painful recalling my memories of that year. I wonder even now ... what if I had met with his Kindergarten teacher in a detailed way before the start of the school year to share with her Owen's high sensitivity and how it shapes him? What if I told her a story about Owen's preschool experience and the special relationship we established with his teacher, Frances? What if I had listened to my gut instinct and removed him from the class when he was obviously not well or happy there? What if I had stopped trying to make it work? What if I had trusted myself to do what Owen needed and worried less about how I would look to staff? My wonders lead me to consider what kind of teacher characteristics best suit the needs of highly sensitive students?

Highly Sensitive Children (HSC)

What is a Highly Sensitive Child? There is no one simple answer or definition that describes all aspects of high sensitivity. In her book, *The Highly Sensitive Child: Helping Our Children Thrive When the World Overwhelms Them*, clinical psychologist Elaine Aron (2002), discussed what does and does not characterize high sensitivity. She did not give one succinct definition for highly sensitive children as these children have many uniquely defining characteristics that, together, create a picture of how high sensitivity presents within that one individual. HSC is a personality trait, a dominant trait, yet one of the many any child possesses. HSC is not a special need, disorder, dysfunction, or diagnosable condition. I remember reading Aron's work for the first time and how surprised and relieved I felt when I read, "One such common inherited trait is high

sensitivity, found in about 15-20 percent of children (the percentage is the same in boys and girls)" (pp xi). It was affirming to know how common this trait is, and also how important it is to have highly sensitive individuals as members of our society:

... [T]here are also advantages in having a child who is different... Some teachers, peers, and relatives will think your child's differences are marvelous. From these people your child will gain the self-esteem she will need when meeting up with some of the other people, the majority in our culture, who are less impressed with sensitivity.

Indeed, in some cultures it is a social advantage, an honor to be sensitive. Peoples living close to the earth esteem their highly sensitive herbalists, trackers, and shamans... Perhaps 'old' cultures with rich artistic, philosophical, and spiritual traditions... such as China and Europe can afford to reward sensitivity more than 'new' immigrant cultures... which have rewarded pioneering 'macho' men and 'tough' women who gave little thought to risks in a new land." (Aron, 2002, p. 63)

Owen's sensitivity was apparent early on in his infancy. Owen, a joyful baby, needed additional comforts and highly attuned caregivers who could anticipate and react to his needs before he became overwhelmed.

I noticed when Owen was a toddler he needed a lot of preparatory warning, or time, to ready himself for change. My mom pointed it out to me that his transitions would be smoother if I just gave him more advanced notice. For example, when we played at the park and it was time to leave I could not say, "We are leaving soon," but instead needed to say, "We are leaving in 20 minutes." Followed by, "We are leaving in 10 minutes." "We are leaving in 5 minutes." "Two more minutes..." Until I could say, "It is time to go," by which time he would be prepared and calmly and happily leave with me. If I did not allow this extra time for him to prepare, he would panic, as he was not ready and it would all be happening too fast.

HSC are individuals with a shared trait. It took time for me to learn what Owen's specific characteristics are and I wondered—and worried—as he grew, how he would fare in a school setting. Would the environment be too chaotic and stressful? Would the children be kind to him? I have witnessed a myriad of Owen's experiences and collectively I have learned from these experiences what his needs are, and how I can work to meet them. All of this makes me wonder, "How might his teacher and his classmates learn to understand him and his needs in just a short time?"

Grade 3

After three years of Owen crying nearly every day and telling me he hates school, we are standing together in the carpeted hallway of the new school in which I enrolled him.

At Owen's new school his new teacher, Miss Lacey, stands at the doorway to Owen's classroom (as she does at the start and end each day) and greets each student. When the crowd peters out, my son and I step forward together. Owen makes eye contact, showing his significant growth in confidence, but he still stands back a little, out of arms reach. I remember his first week of Kindergarten when his teacher physically held him back, preventing him from coming to me, while he cried and screamed, "Mommy!" in genuine fear of being left without me. In that moment I had stepped around the corner in that cinder-blocked hallway where Owen could not see me, tears pouring down my face, knowing then I was doing the wrong thing for him by ignoring that feeling deep in my belly that screamed, "Don't allow this! It's wrong!" I wondered if Owen was reliving this moment too. We approach the new teacher together—a united front.

Miss Lacey bends at the waist to meet my son eye to eye, smiles warmly at him, and reaches out her hand. She shakes Owen's hand and says the words that convince me this change is exactly the right thing for my sweet boy. "Hi Owen. How are you feeling today?"



Fig. 2: Owen's Grade 3 school photo, Age 8

How are you feeling? In the time between his Kindergarten year and Grade 3, that was the first time anyone outside of our family and friends had asked him such a meaningful question. Not, “How are you?” or, “First day, are you excited?” but, “How are you feeling?” In one simple sentence she had conveyed to him that she knew he did indeed have feelings and, in fact, she cared about them. Owen is happy at his new school. When I pick him up he tells me about his day and what he did. I no longer get a list as we travel from the school door to the door of our home of the things he did not like, or thought were unfair or wrong or unkind or inexplicable. He comes home happy. Not sullen and angry. He is my summer child—happy and excited, with twinkling eyes and stories to tell. I have never seen this in him before during the school year. It surprised me to learn he can love school and not just tolerate it. I still find myself basking in the sense of relief that this experience has brought me. “How are you feeling?” This question set the stage for the possibility that my son could, in fact, be himself at school—a feeling human being, and a happy one as well.

This year when I read Owen’s neatly typed report card I cried. I cried with the relief in knowing my child is seen. His teacher wrote, “Owen arrives at school each day with a smile and is ready to learn... His attitude toward school is excellent!” Could this be the same child I sent to school in Kindergarten, Grade 1, and Grade 2? Not once this year has Owen complained that he did not want to go to school. Why? What has caused such a dramatic change in his relationship with school? Has it made a difference that his high sensitivity is recognized and attended to each day?

I am reminded of Sandra Finney’s (2013) book, *Strong Spirits, Kind Hearts: Helping Students Develop Inner Strength, Resilience, and Meaning*. She wrote,

Like many teachers, I am convinced that attending to the hearts and spirits of students strengthens their overall abilities to learn and is never time wasted. There is a growing body of evidence suggesting that students who receive support for their personal and spiritual development become better learners. (p. xi)

How does a teacher do this on a level that is more layered and much deeper than may first appear necessary?

Environment

I am in the crush of milling parents, surrounded by the smiling faces in posters on the walls, on Owen’s first day at his new school. There are two doors across the hall from one another, one for each lower elementary classroom. Both are positioned at 45-degree

angles so I can see into each room as I am standing in the hallway. I notice immediately how different this school looks and feels. Outside of each door is a little table and neatly arranged on it is a communication book. Above that is a white board with welcome messages and notes of information for parents. There is a row of family mailboxes with the children's names labelled neatly beneath each box. Above the mailboxes there is art work. There are potted plants with shiny healthy leaves and benches and chairs along both walls for waiting parents to sit.

I am nervous. My son is anxiously picking his nails and standing protectively close. This school is so different. The carpeted floors dampen the sound and make it feel warmer inside. The walls are papered and decorated with framed photographs of the teachers (and later the students). The classroom Owen will enter is also carpeted. It has big floor-to-ceiling windows in each corner with sheer coloured curtains and plants. Soft couches, chairs, a lamp, and bookshelves fill one corner like a living room. A kitchen area with tables and chairs occupies another corner. There is a pet fish and a homey feel. Most notably it is so much quieter than what we are used to in the chaos of hallway bell times. There is no chaos. There are no bells. I came to discover later that there is often soft classical music playing in the hallways.

Owen entered this new environment with an unpleasant school history, and I learned from Owen's Kindergarten experience, "...with a few bad experiences, HSC are more likely than others to become shy, fearful, or depressed" (Aron, 2002, p. 10). I hoped this change in schools would result in Aron's description that "with a little gentle guidance, they are exceptionally creative, cooperative, and kind – except when overwhelmed..." (p. 10). I knew Owen's best qualities (kindness, compassion, and creativity) related to his sensitivity and, by the time he reached Grade 3, I was feeling desperate for him to experience an environment at school where demonstrating these characteristics felt possible.

Stimulation

I cannot remember how many times Owen's teachers wrote on his report cards and commented at interview times how they would like to hear him speak more in class. Sometimes he was labelled shy. (He is not shy. He is cautious. They are not the same thing.) He was spoken about as though his quietness needed fixing, and he was openly encouraged to participate more during verbal exchange. Looking back, I wonder why no one asked why he was choosing quiet observation; what he was learning from that vantage point; what reason he had to be silent? Aron (2002) wrote,

First, most schools are excruciatingly overstimulating..., and the classrooms are usually overcrowded, noisy by design as well as because of the loud voices used, and the days are long. At the same time, they are often boring for HSCs, since they grasp their teachers' messages right away, but these have to be repeated over and over to the other students. Then the HSC's mind wanders, returns, and finds she has missed something, which is also troubling. ...But at school, HSCs are a true minority in the ways they behave. For example, they tend to become quiet and observe the highly stimulating environment. They are left out of the interaction – leave themselves out... Given the above, your HSC is likely to be anxious at school as well as overaroused due to the overstimulation. Overarousal and high anxiety interfere with the expression of social, academic, and athletic skills. As a result, the association of anxiety with school is eventually justified. Your child is trying to be perfect while the body is in a far from perfect state. (pp. 251–252)

In my memory of Owen's early days at school, these points of Aron's certainly feel true. The comments from his teachers were true in that he was not expressing himself freely, he was missing some content during lessons, and he was, in some ways, tuning out. Enabling silence in the classroom can be a hard task. Yet, as Finney (2013) described, comfortable silence is important for children (especially HSC) to thrive. "Show patience and calmness while waiting for students' responses. Allow silence to deepen. Honour the right to pass. An environment where it is all right to be silent is also a place where it is safe to speak" (p. 20). I wonder if Owen's lack of attention at times was his body's way of protecting him from the overstimulation of the environment—an environment with not enough space for silence. Owen's old experiences are in such sharp contrast to the Owen his teacher tells me she sees at his new school. What is different? Why does it seem to work better for him at his new school? In a public school setting where the teacher is assigned a classroom filled with desks, a shortage of budget, and an abundance of children, how can (s)he accommodate high sensitivity too?

Reciprocal Parent/Teacher Learning

My thoughts of HSC revolve around awareness. Many teachers are interested in "temperament differences and their effects on learning styles" (Aron, 2002, p. 311) and, given the opportunity, may want to learn more about HSC. Aron suggested that teachers work closely with parents of HSC and refer to previous teachers for insights and helpful suggestions. My conversations with Owen's teachers have varied as much as the teachers themselves. I have discovered over time that the more informed I am on high sensitivity, the better I can communicate Owen's needs. It was Owen's preschool teacher, Frances, who introduced me to the concept of high sensitivity.

I remember Owen's first day of preschool. When the time came to leave Owen, who had been smiling and playing with the other children, little blue fleece sweater zipping around the courtyard, looked up at me, his eyes filled with concern, as if to say, "I was having fun, but you're not leaving me here alone are you?" I smiled at him and walked him to the children at the gate. I was expecting to have to leave and hoped Owen would not cry or make a scene, or insist on leaving with me. When I said goodbye he became anxious. I felt stiff, not wanting to be the parent who had the child with the separation anxiety but knowing I was; he still needed me to feel safe.



Fig. 3: Owen's first day of preschool

Frances, his teacher, immediately understood what was transpiring between us. I believe she already knew to "[r]emain confident that when [HSC] feel secure, they will have a great deal to share. Indeed they often become the most talkative, creative, and lively students" (Aron, 2002, p. 314). She looked at me and invited me inside. She invited me to stay. I stayed with Owen all that week while he slowly, cautiously entered the preschool world and environment Frances had so carefully and thoughtfully constructed. The next week turned into a month of me staying, followed by two months and then three. When I would feel ashamed that I was still there, she would

remind me how important this transition period was for him. She reminded me how much it mattered to him, his sense of safety, and his developing self that I was there. She encouraged me to stay for as long as he needed me. Frances also instructed me to very slowly take a little step further away each week: Owen out of my lap and onto the floor in the circle and me into a little chair beside him; me in the chair outside the circle; me away from the carpet and sitting at the little tables; me in the kitchen visible through the pass through, but in the other room; and finally, me leaving the building and going for short walks and increasing the time away each week until I could actually leave and go home and come back at pick-up time. It took a lot of time and attention. It took a lot of patience. That time was what Owen needed, and it was time I could give.

From my relationship with Frances, I later understood that I, too, was shaped in fearful ways by Owen's Kindergarten experience and it took me time to relax and trust that Owen's sensitivity-related needs could be shared. This year, I have experienced Owen's teacher as curious, receptive, and friendly at all times. Maybe it is working well because I, too, feel safe to share my knowledge about high sensitivity with her. I have discovered that learning and teaching about HSC is a process of reciprocity.

Discipline

In my earlier story of Owen in Kindergarten and his intense worries about breaking rules, it became apparent to me that school, with rules and group lectures, would be difficult for him. I struggle now to recall a time, in his earliest formative years, when I needed to reprimand Owen. He simply did not do things he ought not to be doing. If I explained the reasoning of things to him, pre-emptively, I do not remember ever having to follow up with another conversation repeating the same information. Nor did I say to Owen the common "do nots" of average parenthood. However, we struggled with other things—acknowledging, with a wave or smile, someone when they say hello to you (a major feat!), the frustration of following rules when those around you are not (e.g., cheating and cutting in line), watching others being rewarded/noticed for their speed (e.g., hand raising, first in line), and kids being unkind, usually to others. It was, and continues to be, a painful and challenging experience for Owen. As I write, Owen is neatly printing a wish list of gifts for all of his classmates, just in case he wins an online contest for which the prize is 107 Lego characters.

I remember in the early weeks of Owen's preschool how much he loved to dress up in a purple wizard's robe covered in big yellow stars with a matching pointy hat. He would put it on first during playtime and wear it while he built his block creations. Some of the other little boys began to tease him. Frances noticed this and after a couple

of days she collected all of the children on the carpet for circle time. She talked with the children. I noticed how she asked the children a lot of questions and left many parts of the conversation open ended. It was not what I had expected. I remember speaking with her after, inquiring about her technique (perhaps an indirect way of asking, "Is that enough?" "Where was the lecture, the reprimand?"). Frances replied that I should not worry, that the children understood what she was saying. I waited and I watched. After a day or two the children did, indeed, stop teasing Owen. In Frances' approach to the situation no one child, or group, had been singled out as having misbehaved. She chatted with them and asked them questions centred on kindness and freedoms of expression. I wonder if Owen was even aware the conversation had been sparked by his love of the purple wizard's suit?

In contrast, the rules and strict one-size-fits-all approach to discipline I observed in Owen's earliest experiences at school was very difficult for him. Could it be true that, because he did not need rules the way some other children might, he felt the consequences unfitting and harsh? Aron (2002) described it this way:

...There are more demands and punishments at school, none of them adjusted for the sensitivity of your child. HSCs are usually very conscientious about meeting every demand of school authorities. When an entire class, or your HSC personally, receives a rebuke or punishment, your child is probably crushed by the intensity of message.... (p. 250)

For Owen, watching other children breaking rules and experiencing consequences as a result was a harsh reality. "Never use harsh discipline on HSCs... For some, just knowing they made a mistake will reduce them to tears" (p. 315). I watched Owen not breaking rules but being included in the class scolding. The unfairness of this was something he began to talk about by Grade 2. Prior to that, I wonder, was he trying to be so good—so that he could help the other children avoid getting into trouble—because it pained him so much to observe how the action/consequence sequence unfolded?

At his new school, he says his teacher is always nice and does not ever shout at any of them. I have observed a few quiet conversations, seated at a table and at child's level, in private areas in the school. Sometimes the children, it appears, are sorting out their own concerns with each other and other times it is teacher and student(s). Owen no longer brings home stories of injustice and I see this as a very good sign that Owen is experiencing rules and consequences at his new school in a different way than previously.

Friendship

Early on in Kindergarten, Owen established a friendship with a boy named Kieran. Owen had many friends and made friends easily at school, but we knew from preschool that he needed one person, his person, to feel really secure. At public school this person was Kieran. Aron (2002) wrote, "HSCs thrive in one-on-one relationships and usually need only one good friend for their social and emotional well-being, but that one is essential" (p. 316). I do not know that either boy was ever aware of the role Kieran played. When the boys were split in Grade 3, Owen was devastated. His teacher said she did not see them playing together and did not see the relationship, I suppose, as being anything special or out of the ordinary. But it was. When Owen was fearful at school he knew Kieran was a safe person to be with because Kieran was not afraid. Owen also recognized Kieran to be safe because he, too, was a rule follower and Owen knew he would not get into trouble for misdeeds by spending his time with him. I also knew Kieran to be kind, consistently, to Owen. This friendship was something Owen and I talked about during times of social difficulty with other children in our neighbourhood. Kieran was his person.

Dissimilarly, in Owen's new school, the environment is more conducive to meeting his needs as an HSC, and as a result his need for one-on-one friendship has diminished. I have come to understand that as one need is accommodated other needs may be back-grounded in response. As the needs of HSC are interdependent, or interrelated, it makes sense to find as much of a balance as possible in meeting all of HSC needs simultaneously.

Owen is deeply impacted by the emotional interactions and stresses of others. "HSC is going to feel stronger emotions. Sometimes it's intense love, awe, or joy. But because all children are dealing with new, stressful situations every day, HSCs will also have to feel fear, anger, and sadness, and feel these more intensely than other children" (Aron, 2020, p. 9). It is a struggle for me to help him differentiate his emotions from the emotions of others. Aron explained why this is so hard, "Because of these strong feelings and deep thought, most HSCs are usually empathic. So they suffer more when others suffer and become interested early in social justice. They are also brilliant interpreters of what is happening..." (Aron, 2002, pp. 9-10). This has proven to be one of the most difficult aspects of school for Owen and emphasizes why a single trusted friendship, like that which he has with Kieran, is so valuable.



Fig. 4: Owen, his brother Lucas, and Kieran

Conclusion

Owen, as I shared in my stories, held in his feelings at school and expressed them at home with crying and sadness, anxiety and stress. Another HSC may react with angry outbursts, for example, when stressed or overstimulated—it depends on the child. But, what all HSC share within their trait of high sensitivity are: emotions experienced more intensely, sharp observation skills and perception abilities (Owen knows what is happening in every corner in a shared space), gifts related to creativity, and deeply refined and genuine empathy. All HSC, like Owen,

...are those born with a tendency to notice more in their environments and deeply reflect on everything before acting...As a result, [they] tend to be empathic, smart, intuitive, creative, careful, and conscientious... They are also more easily overwhelmed by 'high volume' or large quantities of input arriving at once. They try to avoid this, and thus are seen to be shy or timid... When they cannot avoid overstimulation, they seem easily 'upset' and 'too sensitive.' (Aron, 2002, p. 7)

How each HSC demonstrates these characteristics is individualistic. Quiet or social, HSC are noticed for their acute sense of justice and their concern and compassion for others. It is the intensity with which they feel and demonstrate these things that makes HSC uniquely different.

Realizing that HSC needs are not independent of one another, it is easier to understand how relationships with teachers are dependent on changes in environment,

stimulation, parent/teacher learning, discipline, and friendship. There are so many small and simple pieces of understanding that teachers can incorporate into their methods of practice that will allow the HSC of the world to shine as bright and vibrantly as Owen does now. In a larger context, teachers are in a position to include attending to HSC as a part of their daily classroom practice and, in doing so, they will raise the bar for which all students' needs for wellness at school may be met.

My experiences of Owen's primary years in school have taught me more about his needs as a HSC. I have also learned about the richness his presence in the classroom creates. He is well loved by his classmates and thriving at his new school. In return for the compassionate attention he receives, he has come into full bloom and now is able, and feeling safe enough, to offer the wholeness of himself and the gifts of his sensitivity.

I offer my stories of experience as an invitation for deeper attention to how highly sensitive children present in a classroom, what their needs are, and how HSC can be included in the school landscape. It is my belief that such careful attending will have a profound impact on their lives in and out of the classroom.

Notes

1. The results of an assessment using a Sensory Processing Measure form showed Owen is functioning in a normal range.
2. Rae is a pseudonym used to protect the identity of the child. All other names in this article are real names.

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Literacies, Leadership, and Inclusive Education: Socially Just Arts-Informed Eco-Justice Pedagogy

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ABSTRACT

In this article we outline the primary tasks of eco-justice education with a focus on identifying diverse cultural methods for understanding inclusion both theoretically and in educational practices. Eco-justice education involves a critical cultural and linguistic analysis of the interrelatedness of the social and ecological crises. It is through arts-informed eco-justice education practices that we are able to outline the importance of the benefits of dwelling in a learning garden. We offer specific examples of how to enact an eco-justice education curriculum in order to foster the development of *eco-social inclusive* habits of mind in teacher education.

Introduction



Our article emerges from several knowledge sources as both authors have been working together for over a decade, bringing together an interdisciplinary focus to fostering socially just arts-informed environmental education. The authors have worked with learners at all levels (K-PhD) and are teacher educators who have spent many years making links between theory and practice in order to promote education that removes barriers to environmental education, and inspires teachers to explore an integrated and inclusive approach to social and environmental learning across the curriculum. Our research question, “Why is poetic inquiry important?” leads us to an intention of our research and teaching, which is to bring a socially just ecological perspective into teacher education curriculum. Poetic inquiry provides

an opportunity for writers to engage their own identities through focal practices as outlined by Borgmann (1992), Sumara (1995), and Kulnieks, Longboat, & Young (2010), in an effort to develop a deeper relationship with places and experiences. With this desire to *integrate* comes a hope that arts-informed eco-justice education will foster *inclusive* education.

From the early 17th century Latin *inclusio(n-)*, from *includere* (shut in), *inclusion* is defined as “the action or state of including or of being included within a group or structure” or “a person or thing that is included within a whole” (OED online). When we refer to inclusion, we consider hierarchies or “isms” such as anthropocentrism (human centeredness), androcentrism (male centeredness), ethnocentrism (ethnic centeredness), ableism (ability centeredness), and so forth. These hierarchies are framed through mechanistic hierarchical language that can perpetuate inequities through *exclusionary practices* (Bowers, 2002, 2006, 2011; Martusewicz, Edmundson, & Lupinacci, 2011). It is with an understanding of inclusion as “a person or thing that is included within a whole” (OED online)—meaning that all persons are included in a place—an ecosystem—in its broadest sense, that we propose inclusion to incorporate learning gardens in educational research and practice.

What follows is an overview of eco-justice education (EJE) with an emphasis on arts-informed educational practices in the context of a learning garden program. In the context of this article, our arts-informed practices involve poetry as the art that is used in our curriculum. We bring forth a framework that includes an excerpt from an environmental autobiography (Young, 2006) that traces early memories of childhood learning and playing in the natural world, and two poems, *Granny* (Young, 2014) and *Icy Daze* (Kulnieks, 2014) about intergenerational knowledge and food sustainability, as we frame an approach to inclusive education.

Eco-Justice Education

EJE involves two primary tasks. The first task entails a critical cultural and linguistic analysis of the ecological and social crises—as inextricably linked—through a critique of modernism, local-global and scientific-technological perspectives, and the mechanistic nature of root metaphors that frame language and perception (Bowers, 2002, 2006, 2011; Martusewicz et al., 2011). For example, in order to help learners engage in a deeper understanding of inclusion, we would include an overview of how ecosystems are under increasing pressure to sustain human life; sustainability of food growth and access to clean water continue to become more and more scarce, and as a result, social inequities will become more and more prevalent. In addition, we consider

how culture and language separates humans from the natural world and leads to the loss of biodiversity that all life depends on.

While much time can be spent on elaborating how humans got to the place where the natural world is being undermined, what we focus on is that regardless of race, class, gender, or abilities, we are all sustained and interconnected with a local eco-system. Inclusion involves all living things. By framing our current social and ecological realities at the outset, we move toward the second task of EJE that involves identifying diverse cultural methods for possible activism through an analysis of the local environment, identifying non-monetized relationships, place-based learning, and an integration of intergenerational knowledge (Bowers, 2002, 2006, 2011; Martusewicz et al., 2011). EJE provides an array of cultural methods for understanding inclusive education involving socially just ecological perspectives and practices. We believe that an arts-informed curriculum can connect learners with natural landscapes by broadening an understanding of inclusive education and enhancing eco-social literacy perspectives. We accomplish this second task by elaborating on the connection between stories, poetry, and a broader understanding of inclusion through a learning garden alternative practicum program.

Arts-Informed Eco-Justice Education Through Environmental Autobiography and Poetry in a Learning Garden Program

As they design their own garden beds, students begin to fit plants and life cycles into the context of place. (Williams & Brown, 2012, p. 32)

The Learning Garden: In 2012, a learning garden alternative practicum was introduced in an already established teacher education program, alongside an Eco-Mentorship Program. The framework of the learning garden was informed by Williams and Brown (2012) who have noted: “The learning gardens provide comprehensive, experiential, and transformative experiences to students creating a grounded sense of place before they can truly become stewards of the land” (p. 32).

Through the learning garden we explore our own relationships with place and we learn about intergenerational knowledge, sustainable food systems, and local and global relationships. Teacher candidates work together and are engaged in planting activities as they prepare to enter local K-12 classrooms to help foster learning gardens. The gardening practices are accompanied by arts-informed writing activities. For example, students are asked to remember their earliest memories of their engagement



Fig. 1: Learning garden 2013

with/in the natural world. In the following section we have chosen an excerpt from an environmental autobiography that provides an example of lived experiences of the development of a relationship with the natural world. These narratives also reveal the development of ecological habits of mind. Initially, we draw upon experiences of childhood playing in the natural world. The autobiographical excerpt informs an understanding of the ways inclusive education involves learning from a place.

Excerpt From an Environmental Autobiography

The role of the imagination is not to resolve, not to point the way, not to improve. It is to awaken, to disclose the ordinarily unseen, unheard and unexpected. (Greene, 1995, p. 28)

A special place that my friends and I liked to visit was Dylan Woods located in Rosemère, Laval, Québec near the Laurentian Mountains. We were all the same age and we were connected to our ways of knowing and ways of being in natural landscapes through our daily practices of playing in the woods. The woods had a golf course backing on to one side and a swamp at the other. Once inside the bush, there were paths that found us. We had to pay attention to our surroundings in the swamp because the swamp was alive and it was expected of us. We all knew this and were always aware while we walked through the bog. Understanding the significance of natural places came easy as a child as we had a real respect for where we explored. The walk through the woods was magical because everything was alive. We crossed logs and wet moss and knew our way to the special place deep inside the forest. The branches that we held onto in order to cross over into the swamp were known by heart. Once you got to the large stump you had to go left and bend under the large

branch that had fallen over. Inside the special place you could see all of the logs in a circle. One log had a very large hollow stump behind it in a sort of podium fashion. When we stood on the logs in a round circle we were surrounding quicksand. There was an opening to the sky through the evergreens that let in a stream of sunshine, making the area surprisingly bright in contrast with the rest of the swamp. The bog was so thick that it was hard to tell at times where the quicksand began and ended. (Young, 2006, pp. 39–40)

The environmental autobiographical excerpt that we chose reveals a mythical place where children ran free and played and learned about natural landscapes, evading what Louv (2008) terms *nature deficit disorder*. As Cooper (1978), Hester, (1985), and Wyman (1987) outline, environmental autobiography is an essential aspect of environmental education. Through environmental autobiography deep relationships can be formed between language and landscape (Kulnieks, 2009; Young, 2006). These relationships are what we refer to as ecohermeneutic in nature because they trace language rearward beyond their first usage and back to the Earth (Kulnieks, Longboat & Young, 2010). Through environmental autobiography, the writer is focused on places where she and her friends had meaningful engagements with intact ecosystems. These encounters serve as a way to shift from a place that Borgmann (1992) refers to as “hyper-reality,” to activities that fostered connections with local places.

A further dimension of environmental autobiography is moving towards exploring how to represent ideas through a process of poetic inquiry. The process of poetic inquiry that we engaged in involves writing through the senses. If possible, our writing process takes place outdoors beside a garden where there are trees and wildlife. We write with our students and engage in the poetry process together. Beginning with a period of mediation to clear all thoughts from our mind, we focus on one special place that holds within it special memories. By dwelling on this place, we spend time imaging it through the senses and ruminate about what it felt like, looked like, smelled like, tasted like, and what sounds are evoked by this memory. As the senses are evoked, the writing process begins whereby we “free write,” keeping the flow of the writing moving in order to capture all of the senses involved in the memory. We then spend time reworking the initial piece of writing through a step-by-step process. First we remove conjunctions, prepositions, and pronouns, which leaves nouns, adjectives, and verbs. The remaining prose is rearranged into a more poetic form by inserting punctuation if need be. The process of moving from a long piece of prose to a poem often involves several steps, as mentioned above, and involves several drafts. The following poem, entitled *Granny*, outlines and describes interconnectedness with local landscapes and the importance of intergenerational knowledge.

Granny

Harvest time in 1935—
after dog days of summer
harried grandmother stands patiently
bare feet in the farmhouse kitchen
next to the wood stove
watches the garden grow
round hips cling her dress like early ripened fruit

she never tires of her care giving
fragrance of boiling apples

everything is a verb:
tilling, planting, growing,
watering, picking, peeling,
pickling, jarring
all to the rise and fall of bird song melody
a beat, a rhythm to work by

kneeling down to the soil she watches them grow
not simply delicacies
but her muse
a deep love of living things

(Young, 2014)

From this poem, our understanding of diversity and inclusion as necessary for survival, and the true nature of interconnectedness of all living things, develops as we are reminded that we learned from elders who had meaningful relationships to natural landscapes. This poem reminds us of the importance of learning to understand and to participate in healthy focal activities like growing, collecting, and preparing foods. These activities inspired an understanding that food does not come from a grocery store as we closely watched the rhythm of the seasons: planting-growing-harvesting-preserving and conserving. It was taken for granted that an important part of life included sustainable practices. For Gregory Cajete (1994), "Art, as a human thinking and expressing process, is intimately connected to the creative explosion of human consciousness" (p. 153). As we engage in writing activities that bring memories and

landscape together, as in the excerpt from the environmental autobiography or in the poem *Granny*, we are learning through poetic inquiry. Solnit (2000) writes:

To walk the same route again can mean to think the same thoughts again, as though thoughts and ideas were indeed fixed objects in a landscape one need only know how to travel through. In this way, walking is reading, even when both the walking and reading are imaginary, and the landscape of the memory becomes a text as stable as that to be found in the garden, the labyrinth, or the stations. (p. 77)

Solnit's work, *Wanderlust*, highlights the importance of understanding relationships between memory and landscape as inclusionary practices. Walking the land is an essential part of knowing it. Moving beyond buildings to consider the things humanity depends on for survival becomes part of a learning process essential for fostering a love for the gifts that the earth provides. The following poem takes up Solnit's (2000) understanding that memory requires landscape. It is part of the author's inquiry about our dependency upon the global economy and the importance of local sustainable food.

Ice daze

boiling water becomes snow
thrown into the air this last working day of the year
memories warm you over hand-picked wild rice, beef, garlic and mushroom gravy
cherished in time with friends who left us long ago
missed as we walk paths into future journeys

new decades did not override
grandmother's treats from the kitchen or
grandfather's instructions that emerge from rocks and trees
persistence to find our way through weather-born calamities
fishing and hunting focal practices you could not cease

breeze moves through maple-leafed symbol of coming together
extended outdoor activities revitalized for weeks illuminates the storm's power
branches and electrical wires layered with ice
still
crash into frozen ground
how do we make warmth and light?
focus echoes throughout the city

electricity failures extend for days
witness hotels and restaurants closed as pipes begin freeze
no time to ruminate over survival skills
too late to learn what we need to know

search for fruit picked, dried and canned in sun-lit rays
primordial instincts re-kindled
sounds of wind permeate the distant hum of generators
stars visible in crisp darkness clarifies deep dependencies

time and space reconciled
how far have we travelled
beyond remembered tangerine glow of sunrises past
woodshed near the hand-dug basement housed in earth
stocked with winter provisions
families reliant on each other to keep warm and nourished

(Kulnieks, 2014)

The above poem illustrates how a return to particular places and events over a course of time becomes a rumination of our interconnectedness to our local landscapes. It is through poetic inquiry that we can consider what is really important. For example, topics such as food, shelter, and basic survival reveal the importance of understanding intergenerational knowledge that is passed down from elders. In “Original Instructions,” Nelson (2008) outlines the importance of healthy ways of eating through practices like “slow food.” The poem reminds us of the importance of taking a few steps back from the way things are. It is important to consider what John Mohawk (Nelson, 2008) and Indigenous thinkers around the world remind us, that food should be understood as medicine. This clearly goes against language and imagery that suggest that food is fuel.

With an increasing reliance on individualism and consumerism over the significance of community and local ecosystems, it becomes necessary to engage students in EJE practices that foster eco-social inclusive habits of mind. In *Rebels against the future: The Luddites and their war on the industrial revolution*, Kirkpatrick Sale (1995) explores how the global industrial consumer-dependent system of production trumps local culture. He writes:

All that ‘community’ implies—self-sufficiency, mutual aid, morality in the market place, stubborn tradition, regulation by custom, organic knowledge instead of

mechanistic science—had to be steadily and systematically disrupted and displaced. All the practices that kept the individual from being a consumer had to be done away with so that the cogs and wheels of an unfettered machine called the ‘economy’ could operate with interference, influenced merely by invisible hands and inevitable balances. (p. 38)

Sale suggests that with the increased dependency on the global economy comes a destruction of different forms of intergenerational knowledge, and all of the expertise required to sustain healthy relationships with local environments. He understands that marginalized groups are the most vulnerable in society that blindly support consumer-dependent lives. Socially just inclusive education needs to include an understanding of bioregionalism and the necessity of interrelationships with local ecosystems.

Conclusion

There are many ways that educators can inspire creative ways of thinking about the challenges we will all face in the future. Arts-informed curriculum can inspire a dialogue between socially just and ecologically minded theorists about how to develop inclusive curriculum. Educators should consider what they can infuse into the curriculum to prepare students for the future. In light of recent ice storms, heavy winter weather, and power outages that last increasingly lengthy periods of time, it is important to help students think about how they will prepare for similar situations. As Kulnieks’ poem alludes to, we do not know when we will be faced with situations beyond our control. Art—whether through painting, photography, or poetic inquiry—provides an opportunity to explore possibilities that are student-centered, student-motivated, and inspired.

Poetic inquiry can provide spaces to consider what is at the heart of student thinking and to develop knowledge about local landscapes. It is important for learners to have an opportunity to create and engage with activities that will sustain them in the years beyond their immersion in public systems of education. Ultimately, through poetic inquiry and engagement in learning gardens we believe that an arts-informed curriculum can inspire a dialogue about inclusive education that involves an analysis of the interconnectedness between social and ecological inequities that continue to grow in the 21st century. Arts-informed practices can provide an opportunity to explore eco-socially inclusive habits of mind that are essential for healthy ways of preparing for the future.

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Funds of Knowledge and Student Engagement: A Qualitative Study on Latino High School Students

Angela Macias and Jose Lalas

ABSTRACT

This article summarizes research conducted by a teacher researcher in a working-class community. The participants included 10 Latino students, five parents, and five teachers. This qualitative study utilized narrative inquiry to construct the stories of all 20 participants in order to investigate how funds of knowledge is perceived, interpreted, and used by students, parents, and teachers in this high school community. Interviews, observations, document analysis, and photovoice journals were used to gather data. Findings indicated that teachers perceived funds of knowledge differently than students and their parents, which may result in a loss of instructional opportunities.

Real education should consist of drawing the goodness and the best out of our own students. What better books can there be than the book of humanity?
– Cesar Chavez

This study investigates the engagement of Latino students in a high school English class. The teacher researcher utilizes the *funds of knowledge* theory made popular by Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzales (1992) that used an anthropological approach to educational research. *Funds of knowledge* is defined as “historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skill essential for household and individual functioning and well-being” (p. 133). This approach attempts to counteract the cultural deficit thinking that has inadvertently become prevalent in our school systems, preventing an inclusive environment. A *funds of knowledge* lens was applied to this qualitative study with the goal of

analyzing student engagement with regards to a population of this school setting that experiences much lower success rates than its peers.

In order to study *funds of knowledge*, one must first understand its antitheses—deficit thinking. Using Freire’s (1970) theory of the banking model, one could interpret many elements of public education as a system that utilizes a deficit philosophy. Our system often forces teachers to focus on what students do not have, or cannot do, rather than the positive aspects of their abilities, thus alienating students facing academic struggles. The results are a perspective that education, for some students, means loading them up with more information because they are missing too much already—drilling with boring reviews and test-taking skills in remedial classes. Freire (1970) argues that this process is oppressive because it holds the teacher as a giver of needed valuables and puts the students in a role of those who are needy and devalued for their knowledge. Instead, learning should consist of utilizing prior knowledge to form new understandings; a concept that teachers consciously know, but often do not act upon due to the flawed system in which they work. Inclusion of all students in a positive educational process is impossible under the banking model.

Because of the injustice caused by this flawed philosophy, Ladson-Billings (2006) made a suggestion for changing educational lingo from “achievement gap” to “education debt.” In other words, the blame for certain educational problems is often laid on students, rather than the system within which they are educated. Subgroups of students who do not perform as high as their peers are often labeled as *lacking skills, in need of intervention, in need of remediation, limited-English proficient, lacking relevant experiences, having special needs, at risk of failure, or at risk of dropping out*. Each of these labels demonstrates the limited value that is placed on the skills, language, or experiences of these students. These negative labels reflect deficit thinking, but are present in many schools. Many Latino students are trying to find success in a system that sees them as deficient. In order to repay this “education debt” owed to them, we must tap into their *funds of knowledge*.

Cultural Capital refers to the cultural knowledge that people carry due to their background, which can be used for upward mobility. Bourdieu and Passeron (1989) argue that schools often reproduce the class systems in our societies by unfairly distributing cultural capital—a theoretical explanation for why providing inclusion and equal opportunities is such a challenge. Considering the deficit perspective that is present in our education system, it is pertinent to next consider what kinds of cultural capital students have, maintain, gain, and even lose in the schooling process. Valenzuela’s study (1999) found that it is possible for educational systems to reduce

Latino students' cultural capital rather than add to it. This process occurs by limiting access to certain educational opportunities, labeling, and tracking—all of which take place in public schools. This does not imply that there is not an academic dilemma regarding student achievement. Instead, Valenzuela's study highlights the need for pedagogical change. The *funds of knowledge* approach to educational research aims at this kind of pedagogical change (Moll et al., 1992). Therefore, rather than studying what students do not have or cannot do, we consciously seek to identify their *funds of knowledge* that can be utilized in an academic setting, thus allowing for the construction and increase of cultural capital and ultimately inclusion and success.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of funds of knowledge on student engagement in order to contribute to research that assumes a positive approach to understanding the cultural skills and experiences of working-class Latino students. The goal of this study was to identify common themes related to *funds of knowledge* concerning Latino students as well as produce recommendations for instruction based on the findings.

The methodology used in this qualitative study was narrative inquiry: Interviews, observations, teachers' lesson plans, class discussion, and students' photovoice journals were analyzed in order to construct narratives that portray the authentic voices of participants (Sperling & Appleman, 2011). Seeking to construct an authentic voice of another is a huge challenge. Given this task, the teacher researcher chose to include a unique strategy for data collection called "photovoice," that is often used to give a voice to marginalized groups of people. Photovoice was chosen as a method to pair with other research methods in order to empower student participants to share experiences from their own perspectives (Whitney, 2006). Photovoice involves allowing participants to gather photos that illustrate an issue in their community, over which they may otherwise have no power.

Wang and Buris (1997) created Photovoice as a method of research that aims to reach policy makers with unique perspectives of people who are normally subjugated or oppressed. Although *subjugated* may seem like a strong word to describe the situation of these students, one must consider the purpose of a photovoice project—*influencing* policy makers. In the situation of these students, they are participants in a schooling system in which they are considered deficient and have little influence over.

Although the school site in this study has a positive reputation for being a safe environment with good teachers, GPAs and graduation rates for Latino students are still a huge concern in this community. Negative labels put Latino students in a position to have less of a voice over educational issues, which is a problem across the country.

Similar to many photovoice projects that seek to share the voice of a population in order to influence policy makers, the goal in this project is to share the authentic voices of students in order to influence instructional practices among educators. Obviously, this study is less political than many photovoice research projects, yet the issues are equally as important.

All students in the teacher researcher's class were given the photovoice journal as an assignment. Ten of the students were selected to be participants in the study. Students were recruited to be participants by fitting three criteria. 1) They were students of the researcher, 2) they were Latino, and 3) they agreed to participate with parent permission. The first 10 who fit this criteria and turned in their permission slips were selected. Students who participated in the study were given the option of using disposable cameras as well as their own personal resources to develop a journal of photos and writing that reflected their funds of knowledge. Incidentally, due to the use of modern technology, students were actually somewhat uncomfortable with the outdated nature of the disposable cameras and preferred to use cell phones, Internet, and social media to attain pictures. Students were told that this research was to help teachers better understand them as learners, which seemed to please many of them and make them proud to participate.

Each group of participants—students, parents, and teachers—produced two forms of data. Interviews, which included open-ended questions, were conducted with teachers and parents. Observation field notes were also used for parents. Teachers' lesson plans were analyzed as well. Students' photovoice journals and observation field notes were used. All of these data were analyzed to form narratives for each participant.

Prior to gathering data, *Esri* (Environmental Systems Research Institute) mapping was used to establish demographic details about the school community. These statistics were compiled in Figures 1-4 in order to create a picture of the economic situations and daily lives of most families in these neighborhoods, and also to establish concrete frames of reference to go along with the term, "working class." The blue arrow in each map indicates the approximate location of the school in this study.

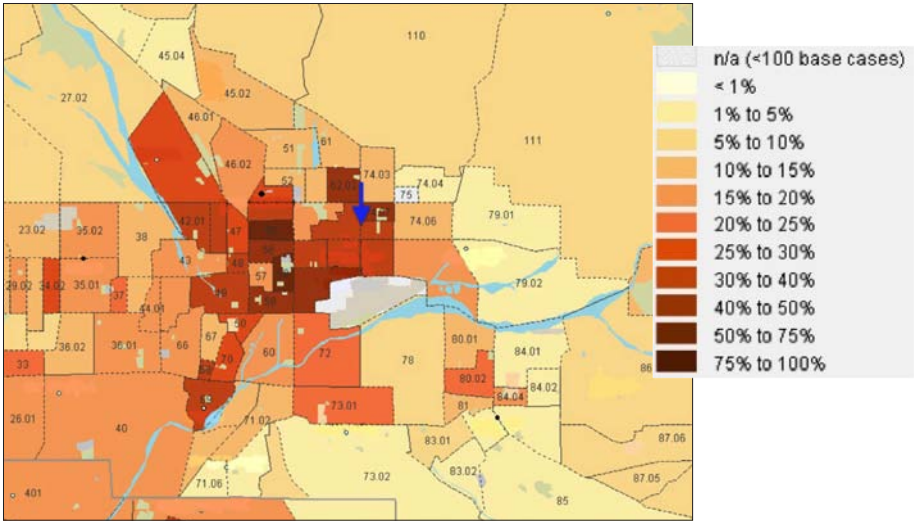


Fig. 1: 2000 census tract – % living in poverty

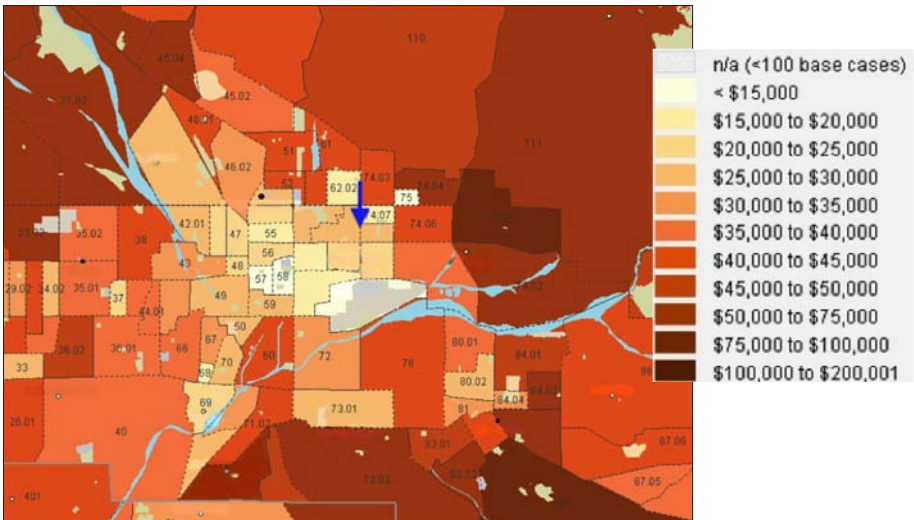


Fig. 2: 2000 census tract – Median household income

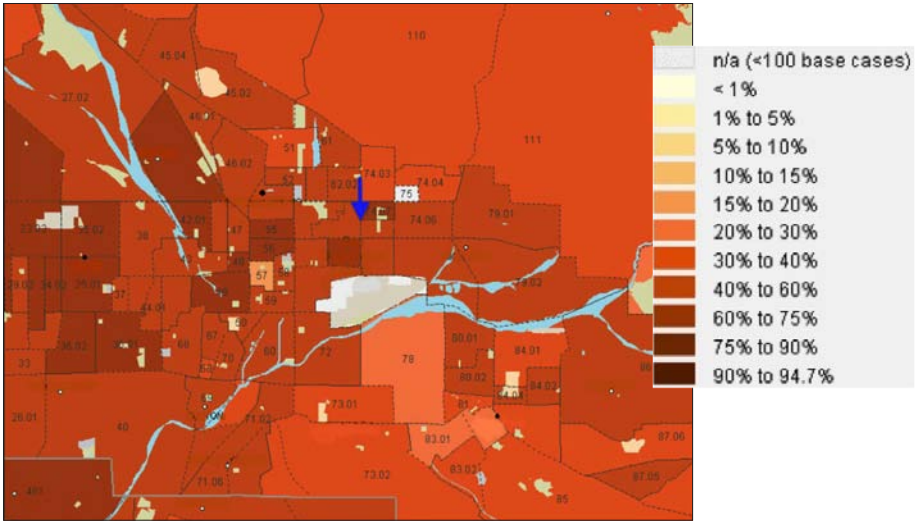


Fig. 3: 2000 census tract – % households with kids

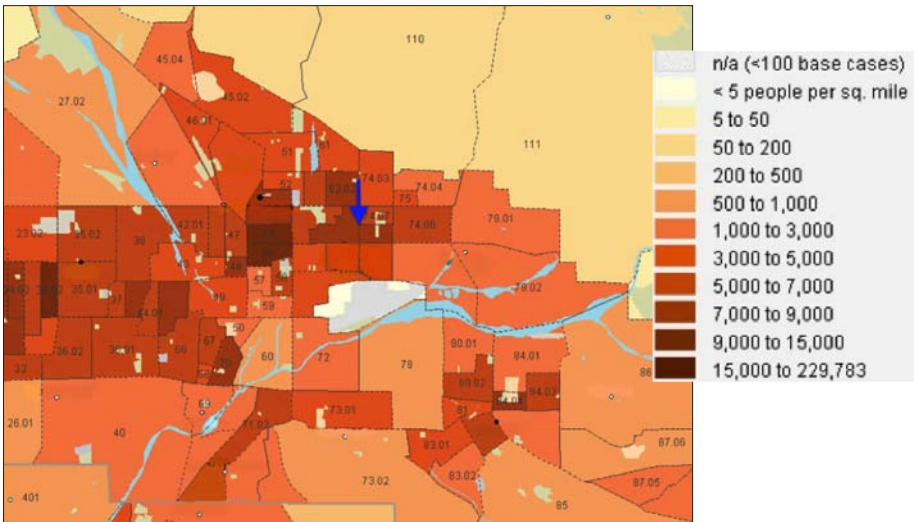


Fig. 4: 2000 census tract – Population density per sq. mile

Knowing details like this about poverty, income, population, and homes with children can help to paint a more complete picture for the setting in which these narratives take place. At the time of this study, the entire school district was under program improvement utilizing Title 1 funding due to the low-income needs of students. This particular school had a population of more than 2,500 students and two smaller high schools are located less than five miles away. As shown in Figures 1-4, students in this school are likely to live in low-income neighborhoods with a fairly high population. Inevitably, these factors will play a part in what kinds of funds of knowledge they bring into the classroom.

Data Collection and Analysis

Participants included 10 ninth-grade students, five parents, and five teachers. The parent participants were parents of students in the study, and the teacher participants were all teachers of the students in the study. The students were all of Mexican descent and come from Spanish-speaking homes. Each of the students is either first generation or immigrated here at a young age. These students all attend a high school in a working-class community of Southern California.

Photovoice & observations. Photovoice is defined as “a process by which people can identify, represent, and enhance their community through specific photographic technique” (Wang & Burris, 1997, p. 369) and is meant to allow participants to enable change in their own community. Data was gathered from students via photovoice journals in which students included original photographs and writing responses that address the prompt, “What affects your learning?” Students were asked to take or find photos and images of people, places, things, and situations that affect their learning in hopes to inform the teacher researcher and, in turn, the teaching community of this high school about their funds of knowledge. The prompt was left very open in order to allow participants to select their own ideas and topics to include in the photovoice journal.

All students in the teacher researcher’s classes were assigned the photovoice journal, and no distinction or special treatment of the participants was used in class in order to create the most comfortable learning environment possible. Several days were spent preparing for the project in class. Students took notes on ethics of using photos and discussed what the reflective style of journal writing entails. Student brainstormed what skills, qualities, and issues are present in their lives that affect learning. We also discussed the variety of types of learning that take place in and out of school.

Students were required to have at least seven entries, although many chose to include more. In fact, a heightened amount of engagement was evident in the project concerning effort and quality for all students. Flexibility was given for topics and due dates. On average, students completed all or more of the requirements with much more detail and attention than the teacher researcher had seen all school year. Although students had the freedom to write about any topic, the majority of journal entries focused on important people in their lives and school-related topics. Many of these journal entries also overlapped in topics, such as important friendships or family members that support school success. Figure 5 demonstrates the overall emphases found in each journal by each of the 10 student participants, and meaningful quotes that reflect these themes.

	OVERALL EMPHASES	MEANINGFUL QUOTES
1	Personal Strengths, Religion	"I encourage myself to succeed." "I give thanks to God for sending me this beautiful gift."
2	Confidence, Competitiveness	"Seeing the smile on her [older sister] face when she looked at my report card was fascinating. Hopefully there will be many more smiles." "We actually compete with each other to see who will get better grades."
3	Supportive Relationships, Following Dreams	"I want to make my parents proud of something; make them see that I am something in my life." "She [mom] always told me to keep my head up high and chase after my dreams and goals."
4	Academic Support, Cultural Roots	"They affect my studies because when I need their help on any class they try to help me." "I like dancing because it's what my ancestors did back then, and I feel like I need to do this too because I want to bring back our culture and where I came from."
5	Family Support, Parent Relationships	"They always help me in the things I need." "...like my dad, I always know that I could count on him because he is the only thing I have."
6	Focus on the Future, Family Support	"I will only get that car that I want if I go to college." "Church helps my family stay bonded."
7	Academic Focus, Motivation for Success	"I want to be the first in my family to go to college." "My friends in Honors tell me to stay after school with them for help...Most of them want me to be successful."

Fig. 5: Student photovoice journal emphases and meaningful quotes

	OVERALL EMPHASES	MEANINGFUL QUOTES
8	Motivation for Academic Success, Individuality	“My aunt and uncle are the first...to graduate... which inspired me because I want to do the same.” “With music, I can be who I really am, instead of pretending to be someone I wish I was.”
9	Family and Friend Support	“My family has so much love inside them.” “My friends are like family to me, we are close to each other, and they always have my back.”
10	Encouraging Relationships, Role Models	“She affects it [my learning] by giving me so much advice when I need it most.” “She makes me be a good role model, so when she’s older she follows good paths.”

Fig. 5: Student photovoice journal emphases and meaningful quotes (cont.)

As indicated by the data in Figure 5, overall the emphasis of personal supportive relationships in contributing to success at school was overwhelming. Every student included pictures and wrote about at least one person who supported him or her academically. These photovoice journals gave a candid look at family and friendship dynamics.

The complexity of the network of relationships demonstrated through these photovoice journals builds a reference for where these *funds of knowledge* begin and reproduce in a cycle of support systems through friends and relatives. Additional *funds of knowledge* revealed by this study were skills related to household responsibilities, sports, technology, art, dance, and other specialized fields. Even with these detailed skills included, the data suggests overwhelming evidence for *funds of knowledge* consisting of skills well beyond everyday tasks. When given the opportunity to write about any kind of learning and anything that affects it, students emphasized relationships.

The data analysis with photovoice journals was a long process. Each day, I observed students in class working on their journals and took notes on the kinds of conversations that were taking place as they reported out to their peers about selections they had made for their journals. The discussions indicated that these were carefully made decisions. Students would answer simple prompting questions on the board such as “What picture did you bring today?” “Why is this important for you to include in your journal?” and “How does this person, place, thing, or situation affect your learning?” The conversations held at each table group proved to be a valuable process that students relied upon for organizing their thoughts as they wrote journal entries reflecting on

their photos. Many students found similarities as they were discussing their selections, even though it was made clear to students that they should not feel pressured to make their journal resemble anyone else’s project—the similarities occurred naturally. It is likely that much of this similarity comes from living in a densely populated area (Figures 3 and 4). Students are able to easily relate to one another due to the closeness in the community, allowing for the kinds of relationship networks described in the journals. This essentially is an example of *funds of knowledge* produced by their environment.

Multiple levels of analysis were utilized for photovoice journals. First, topics chosen by students were compiled into a list based on headings and subheadings. Second, entries were read for additional topics that were not listed in headings. A list of topics was created and entries reread to determine the frequency of topics. The third level of analysis involved identifying interconnectedness of topics by determining which topics were frequently combined within student responses. Finally, each journal was again analyzed as a whole in order to construct individual narratives for each student participant.

As shown in Figure 6, the overwhelming themes that appeared by frequency of topics were related to relationships with friends, family, and mentors. Rather than the general concept of family or friendship, students tended to select specific people on which to focus. In fact, 43% of journal entries were focused on specific people in the students’ lives.

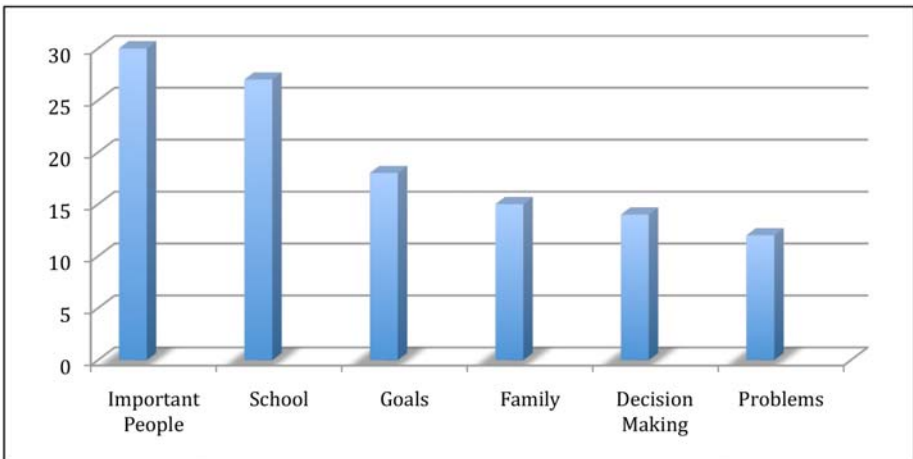


Fig. 6: Frequency of topics in photovoice journals

As Figure 6 indicates, another common theme that emerged related to relationships was school success. Students often wrote about people who helped them in school whether through academic support or encouragement. Many photovoice journal entries mentioned school-related topics, even though students could write about learning in any aspect of life—indicating the importance of school success and people who help them in these goals.

Unexpected funds of knowledge. The photovoice journal writing in small groups provided a nice setting for students to share ideas and practice writing strategies through editing and revising journal entries. The personal topics, journal format, and casual environment for sharing allowed for less pressure than is usually faced with writing assignments. Additionally, it seems that students were freer to open up about their personal *funds of knowledge*. This produced rich data for the study and also, in many cases, enriched the students' overall school experience.

Each participant, as well as the rest of their classmates, included beautiful photos and journal entries that revealed personal cultural capital that a teacher would not likely have access to otherwise. For example, Student 1 described personal strengths and hobbies such as cake decorating and cooking. She included striking pictures of her work that showed beautiful cupcakes, desserts with home-made ingredients, and meals she had prepared for her family that resembled entrees from a gourmet restaurant. This opportunity to write about personal *funds of knowledge* allowed for the teacher researcher to connect her with the catering club on campus to allow her to use these talents in an organized school program.

Another example of such unexpected *funds of knowledge* emerging was in Student 4's journal. This student wrote about cultural heritage that she has learned from her family. Her family practices and performs traditional Aztec dancing she calls Danza. The journal included remarkable photos of her and her mother wearing homemade costumes with intricate designs of brightly colored hand-sewn beads and feathers. The journal entry went on to explain that she regularly performs in front of huge crowds of people, an astonishing skill unexpected in this very shy student. After this discovery the teacher researcher was able to direct her to making a guest appearance in the dance club on campus to demonstrate some of her skills. Additionally, this conversation seemed to stir a new confidence in this child to discuss this hidden talent. She told all of her teachers about upcoming performances. This inadvertently resulted in an unofficial fan club on campus of teachers and students who enjoyed attending these events.

All of the student participants included unique unexpected *funds of knowledge* that they gained from their own family life such as music, sports, child care, computer skills, and many more. One major find through these journals was the amount of technology skills that students possessed for word processing, photo editing, and design. Knowing this allowed the teacher researcher to feel more confident in assigning computer-based assignments in the future, an instructional decision that many of the teacher participants indicated they struggled with due to the fear of limited access.

Interviews. Five parents participated in the interviews, each in their own homes. Each of the parents was a parent of one of the 10 student participants. Parents were asked open-ended questions that revolved around overall school experience of their children and engagement in school. A translator was present to ask all questions in Spanish and translate answers back into English. The teacher researcher also took notes on responses, which were revisited later by the translator in order to assure accuracy.

Throughout the interviews, several open-ended questions that centered on topics including school environment, academics, student activities, challenges, resources, and skills were posed to parent participants. The overall satisfaction with the school was positive. Parents heavily emphasized family values, supportive relationships, and wisdom for future decision-making as key to their child’s academic success. Figure 7 describes overall emphases of each interview session as well as meaningful quotes related to these themes. Two of the parents attended session one and participated together, so there are only four sections for five parents.

	OVERALL EMPHASES	MEANINGFUL QUOTES
1	Parents trust daughters to communicate problems; parents teach daughters to choose friends very wisely	“I encourage my daughters to be very selective with their friends so they pick friends who are equally or more educated so that they are around people who elevate them.”
2	Maintaining extremely high expectations for going to college; parents must be highly involved in children’s education	“I learned that language was not a barrier or an excuse for getting the appropriate education for my child.”

Fig. 7: Parent interviews: overall emphases and meaningful quotes

	OVERALL EMPHASES	MEANINGFUL QUOTES
3	Hard work will help students achieve goals; open honest communication with children allows for better lifelong learning	"I tell my daughter that this is the time in her life and learning is beautiful. If I could go back in time I would go get that education."
4	Utilizing family and friends as a network of support; family bonding through cultural practices	"She needs to try her best, not just be another body or another person there, but to be more than that and to stand out. She is not documented, but that just means she has to try harder."

Fig. 7: Parent interviews: overall emphases and meaningful quotes (cont.)

As shown in Figure 7, one prevalent theme was that all parent participants revealed a close network of relatives, friends, and community members which they relied on for help with their children's growth and academics. One particular example of this was sibling and relative mentoring relationships. Parents and students alike emphasized the importance of older siblings, cousins, aunts, and uncles who mentored younger children in the family. For example, one mother described how she had visited the school and saw that her daughter was not doing well, and witnessed some bullying of other students on campus. She arranged for her daughter to spend time after school with her older brother who had already graduated. The daughter mentioned this relationship in her journal, as well, and described how he gave her an outlet of getting involved in sports and how they went to the gym together daily. Two of the parents described how relatives who were attending the local colleges were in charge of tutoring the high school students in the family and checking their grades. This mentoring was a great source of pride and family tradition for these participants. However, teacher participants seemed unaware of this when asked about students' academic support at home.

Teachers were also interviewed and asked similar open-ended questions about overall school experience and student engagement. Teachers, similar to parents, had a fairly positive view of the school. However, teachers expressed concern for students' relationships having a negative influence on academics. Teachers commonly expressed the following concerns: friends were often a negative influence, parents do not know about or take advantage of resources, and the neighborhood itself does not offer a safe and accommodating place for learning. On the other hand, the parents often reflected on resources in the neighborhood and people who helped their children succeed.

The issue concerning this discrepancy is not whether one party is correct, but simply that there are two interpretations to a complex situation and both may be correct. Generally, parents may be unaware of the negative relationships that distract students from learning in school, and, likewise, teachers are unaware of the positive relationships and resources that students do have access to in their family and neighborhood. Implicit in these findings is a possible lack of communication about these key issues that affect students learning.

Teachers' interview responses and lesson plans indicated that they noticed key learning activities, which produced higher engagement than others. However, it seems that teachers attributed the engagement to lesson design and content rather than the interaction of student relationships, allowed through group projects, such as students indicated in their journals. Interestingly enough, the two teachers whose responses resembled the perspectives of parents most were actually alumni of the school, indicating that the connection to the local culture is helpful in understanding funds of knowledge. This demonstrates the differences in perspective of two adult roles in students' lives—parents and teachers. The comparison of these two participant groups indicate that students are dealt the task of maneuvering two differing sets of expectations from two sets of adults.

The process used to analyze interviews and lesson plans was similar to the photovoice journals in that they were evaluated for themes several times. Multiple levels of analysis were needed to attain an authentic voice of each participant. Some additional steps were needed in interviews. For example, parent interviews were translated since all parents were Spanish speakers. During the interviews, the teacher researcher read the questions, which were then translated into Spanish by the translator. Parents and the translator took extra time to answer and relay information. The teacher researcher took notes during the interview and a voice recording was used as an additional reference. The interviews were then transcribed into a document. This document was then given to the translator for review and compared to the audio recordings to confirm accuracy. Finally, a list of topics was compiled from each conversation. These lists were then merged to result in overall themes that were prevalent among parents and overall themes prevalent among teachers.

Each parent interviewed focused on decision-making in social and academic situations. This seemed to be a very obvious value for each family that participated. One mother said, "I encourage my daughters to be very selective with their friends so they pick friends who are equally or more educated so that they are around people who elevate them." This is representative of the kind of guidance all of the parent participants

focused on regarding their children's relationships with others. This is further evidence that these students have *funds of knowledge* related to constructing and maintaining relationships that support growth and success.

Prevalent Themes and Contrasting Perspectives

A contrasting perspective on *funds of knowledge* was evident in the data gathered from parents and students compared to teachers. The following figures demonstrate general views of each group of participants related to the four most common themes described by all participants: friendships (Figure 8), siblings and relatives (Figure 9), communication skills (Figure 10), and decision-making skills (Figure 11). Each of the following figures demonstrates the similarities and differences among students, parents, and teachers' perspectives on these themes.

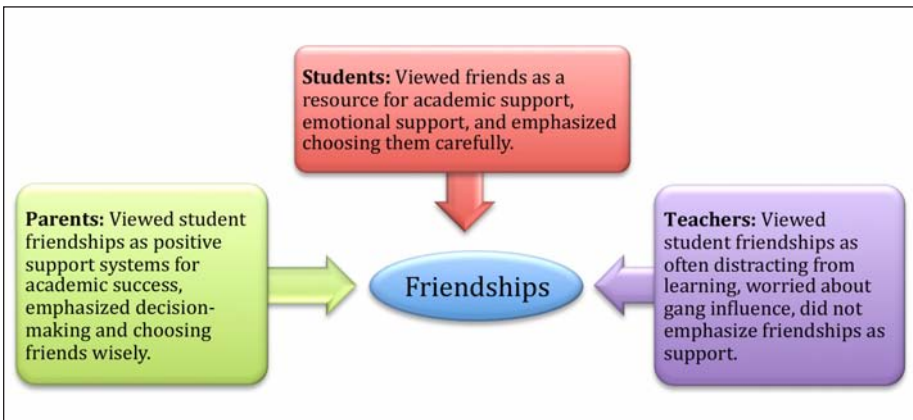


Fig. 8: Friendships

As indicated in Figure 8, students chose to write about friends that they see as a support for their academic success. Although they may also have friends that distract them as teachers indicated, these relationships may not be as important to students since they chose not to write about them in their journals. Parents seemed aware of all kinds of friendships, but emphasized the parenting strategy of decision-making and choosing friendships that would serve as a personal and academic resource. Understandably, the teachers' perspective on student relationships is limited to the time and space that they see students daily in class. For these students, apparently there is a far more intricate network of relationships that teachers could focus on in conversation or encourage students to utilize for academic success.

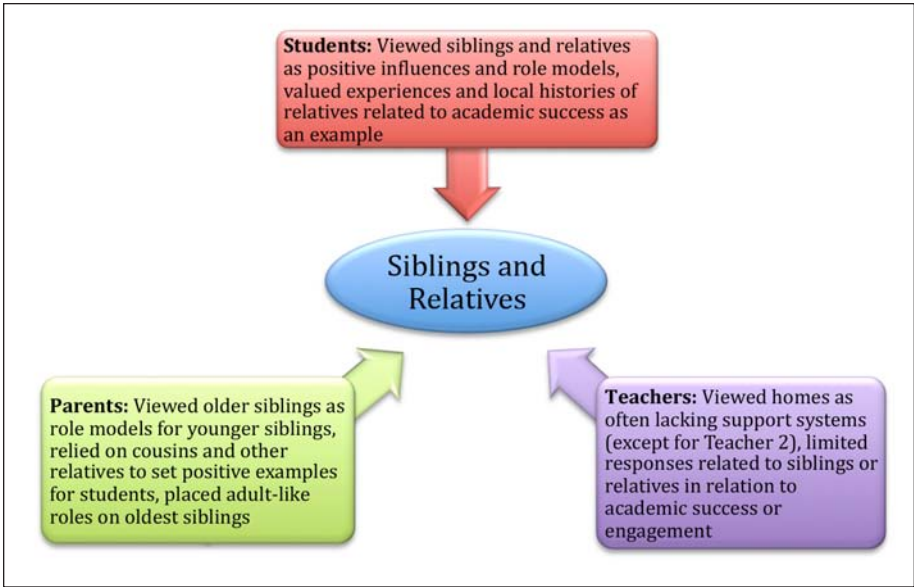


Fig. 9: Siblings and relatives

Figure 9 shows some of the function that intimate relationships offer students, which teachers have no way of seeing in class. Each student in this study seemed to have at least one person in his or her family that functioned as a mentor. In many cases the older siblings and relatives were currently attending this same school or were recent graduates. This offers an untapped resource that teachers could use to promote school success. For example, after this study the teacher researcher began contacting and, in some cases, inviting older siblings into conferences for students who need extra support. This addition is a simple way to utilize this network of support that parents have purposefully orchestrated. Additionally, this concept of mentoring seemed to be a clear usable teaching tool that many students in this school community may understand. Although it is true that teachers' understanding of the school community was not completely uninformed due to the low-income condition of this neighborhood, the picture could be explained as somewhat incomplete since teachers were not aware of this social dynamic and how it could be a resource.

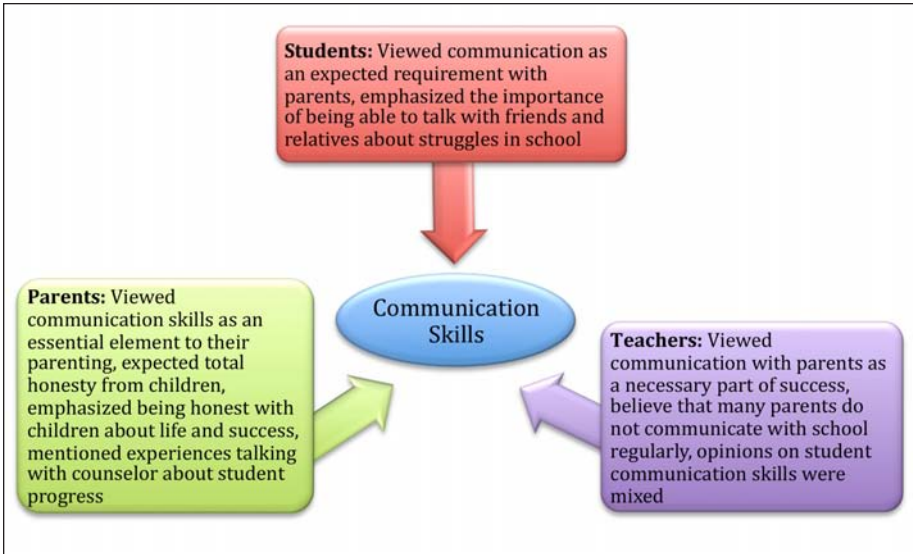


Fig. 10: Communication skills

Figure 10 indicates another instance of an incomplete picture. From their perspective, teachers expected to have more contact with parents and saw this as a weakness within the school community. This need for more communication with teachers did not seem to be expressed by parents. It seems that communication is lost between the school and home. It is possible the expectation teachers have for parents may remove the students from a position of responsibility that their parents have intentionally created, thus creating a miscommunication between parties. In other words, teachers expect parents to call, come in for meetings, and email, but do not assume that they could possibly go straight to the student or another relative to relay a message to parents. Adding this responsibility in communication on the part of the students could show them that teachers understand what parents expect. In these homes, students held much more adult-like roles than teachers may be aware. Therefore, leaving them out of the equation when communicating about school issues may send a mixed message. Although it may be true that communication between teachers and parents needs to be improved, it is possible that the students are actually the missing link in this chain.

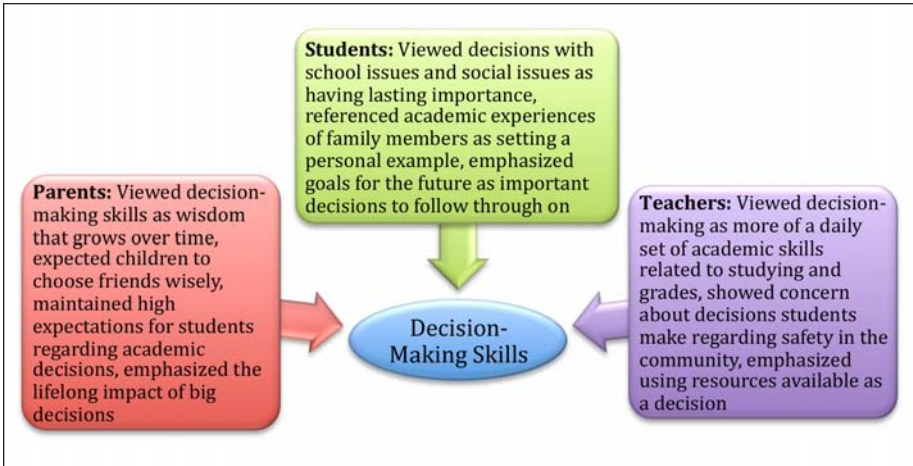


Fig. 11: Decision-making skills

Similarly to the first three themes, decision-making skills seem to reflect a different perspective of all three parties. Figure 11 indicates that all parties see this skill as important. However, teachers focus on different areas than parents and students. While parents see lifelong decisions such as completing school and forming positive relationships as important, teachers focused more on minor daily skills that lead to school success. While students see the value in both of these perspectives, they may not see the connection. It could serve teachers and parents well to learn more about the other perspective on decision-making skills in order to reinforce the importance and how daily decisions do affect lifelong decisions. This kind of conversation could be started by teachers and explicitly laid out for families so that parents can reinforce it, and, likewise, teachers can include the bigger picture in their daily lessons so that both sets of adults are reinforcing the same concepts.

Implications & Conclusions

Based on the results from interviews, field notes, lesson plans, and photovoice journals, one could conclude that there may not be major flaws in the curriculum, instruction, or school environment affecting student engagement in this school community. However, there seem to be contrasting perspectives on students' *funds of knowledge* that may create an inconsistency between home and school, causing learning situations that do not utilize these skills and values to the highest potential. An analogy of a fracture in a bone paints an apt picture of this problem. Rather than

a huge break in our educational system at this school site, such as inaccessibility or completely inappropriate curricular or instructional practices, the problem is almost invisible. Teachers continue to teach daily, receiving less than desirable engagement due to this fractured education—inconsistencies between home dynamics and classroom dynamics that hinder maximum engagement with academic content.

Analysis of lesson plans and interviews with teachers revealed that certain instructional strategies were more effective than others. Teachers seemed to know strategies that worked, but not know why they worked, making it difficult to re-create this engagement in all lessons. For example, most teachers agreed that hands-on group projects resulted in higher engagement than individual seatwork. One even said in reference to a successful lesson,

It was a really great thing to see...students being so involved in this project. They were up there on the table building...they were writing, team playing, and socializing with other students and it was a wonderful lesson. They all worked together as a group.

One obvious piece of information missing from the teacher interviews was that they did not realize the reason behind certain classroom successes could be due to the parenting styles that have used group problem solving and sibling mentoring in the home. Therefore, some group projects work better than others depending on how well they reflect this dynamic. In other words, teachers attributed the engagement to the assignment or content rather than the specific roles students were allowed to take on, which mirrored home dynamics. In lessons that involved group problem solving and a mentoring relationship structure with such specified roles, students were more successful.

The solution to this fractured education could be a mixing of best practices for lesson design and instruction combined with the expertise of the roles, structures, and dynamics of students' home life. The *funds of knowledge* identified in interviews with parents, observations, and student photovoice journals were combined with instructional strategies from teachers' lesson plans. The result is what we are calling *Cross-Educational Teaching*—a newly structured lesson plan style that imitates home dynamics for higher engagement in academic content.

The results of this study showed that Latino student participants were placed in very adult-like roles in their homes. Often problem solving was conducted as a group effort. Older siblings were trained to mentor younger siblings by leading them academically

and in passing on family values and wisdom. Additionally, a huge emphasis on decision-making was prevalent in parenting style. It makes sense that lessons that utilize these skills will be more effective with these students. The following table (Figure 12) represents elements taken from teacher participants lesson plans and matched with similar elements of learning at home in order to produce an approach for classroom instruction that allows for better use of these students’ funds of knowledge.

ELEMENTS OF THE LESSON PLANS	CONNECTION TO HOME	ELEMENTS OF LESSON WITH FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE IMPLEMENTED
A starter or opening question was often given to students as they enter class to begin the lesson.	When students come home, their first interaction with parents is most often an update of their day when personal successes or problems are shared.	Rather than a question with a specific answer to be written down, students could be asked to share something more personal related to the content through discussion.
The beginning of lessons often included an objective or essential question to focus on the academic goal for the day.	To teach lessons to their children, parents often shared personal experiences or experiences of close family members and friends.	To hook students’ interests, personal stories related to content could be shared by the teacher.
Direct instruction such as PowerPoint presentations with note taking followed by teacher modeling was a common method of delivering content.	Rather than passively listening, parents expect children to take on adult-like roles. All members of the family participate equally in a task.	Instead of teachers leading a presentation while students take notes, teachers could give each student some information to share. This way note taking becomes a shared group process instead of a passive activity.
Independent practice often follows direct instruction. This involves answering questions or completing a learning activity in pairs and sharing answers with the class.	At home, parents assign older siblings to lead or supervise younger siblings. Children take this role very seriously. Although younger siblings still have an equal part in a task, older siblings who act as mentors guide them.	Although the process of working in pairs does seem to reflect the cooperative environment of home life, students could take turns fulfilling a mentoring role throughout assignments. This may better reflect the mentoring role of siblings at home.

Fig. 12: Better use of students’ funds of knowledge

ELEMENTS OF THE LESSON PLANS	CONNECTION TO HOME	ELEMENTS OF LESSON WITH FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE IMPLEMENTED
<p>Assessments within lesson plans varied from teacher to teacher. Some use written assignments, some use quizzes, and others projects.</p>	<p>Parents at home were not generally concerned with the details of each lesson or concepts taught. Instead they focused on the big picture of progress. They assess this by open and honest conversation.</p>	<p>Although with our content areas we cannot ignore details, we can mimic this oral communication in order to assess comprehension. Rather than assessments being completely written products, an oral element can also be implemented. Students can be required to share out the big picture. Students can be given a partial grade on this progress of being able to articulate orally the main concepts learned.</p>
<p>Many lessons concluded with a reflection question which students finished before they left class. This allows for one final step in checking comprehension with the lesson.</p>	<p>Reflection happens at home as well. Many students wrote about music and how it helped them focus. Parents also discussed how they expected their children to share feelings about problems they faced at school.</p>	<p>The reflection in class can be modeled after this personal reflection that happens at home. It may build importance to the issue if students are allowed to listen to music and quietly focus on the question. Then discussion in small groups can follow before they turn this in to the teacher. As evident with parent interviews and photovoice journals, students may feel there is more importance attached to a concept if they have to reflect and share about it.</p>

Fig. 12: Better use of students' funds of knowledge (cont.)

The significance of this study is not the reusability of these particular strategies, but rather the process of investigating students' *funds of knowledge*. Educators could create their own version of *Cross-Educational Teaching* in any school community. For this school community, the high school students in this study are given very adult-like roles in the home, take on a mentor role with siblings and relatives, develop networking skills for support, and work in a team-like setting to solve problems and pass on family values. However, these valuable skills—or *funds of knowledge*—may go unused if students are expected to remain passive. Parents emphasize communication skills and decision-making, but often students are expected to be quiet and have little influence on the decisions made in schools. If teachers in other school communities investigated the

funds of knowledge their students have, the process of developing cross-educational teaching could prove to increase student engagement—particularly for low-income, minority students who often have a cultural background different from many of their teachers. Overall, a much more inclusive educational environment could be achieved by utilizing the valuable *funds of knowledge* attained through home dynamics in the classroom.

Reflections From a Teacher Researcher

This study showed me many things about the research process, this school community, and the richness of cultural capital my students have. The best part of researching funds of knowledge is the message that is sent to students in this process—I *care about who you are and what you have to offer!* Although at first students were confused by a writing assignment that was not completely dictated to them, they eventually showed huge gains in engagement and put forth a genuine effort to improve writing skills. I believe this is because the topics were extremely personal and reflected their funds of knowledge, creating an affirming environment that is much more inclusive than traditional methods.

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Storytelling to Teach Cultural Awareness: The Right Story at the Right Time

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ABSTRACT

Stories contain the wisdom of the world, teaching cultural values, building community, celebrating cultural diversity, and preserving cultural identity. Where truth is suppressed, story is an instrument of epiphany and develops metaphorical understanding. A storytelling guild in Canada had been a cultural institution for 23 years, so when the center faced permanent closure, members were devastated. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate the moment of this lived experience using interviews and focus groups. Findings indicated story strengthens content retention and language acquisition. These findings led to the development of a project focused on story-centered lessons for teachers.

She cried. When the talking feather was passed so that participants, students, and guests alike might share their thoughts and perceptions about the Blanket Exercise that they had just experienced, the Haudenosaunee Elder cried. Her tears, she insisted, were tears of gratitude that students, elementary students in their school classrooms, were finally hearing the stories that had so long been suppressed; gratitude that non-Aboriginal storytellers, teachers, and community leaders were stepping forward in unanticipated solidarity to ensure that the untold stories would find their rightful place in a new and deeper understanding of our common past on Turtle Island. It was the right story told at the right time.

A storyteller believes in the power of story to heal the world. In this spirit, Kairos' Blanket Exercise seemed the ideal follow-up project to demonstrate the value and relevance of narrative that had been described by storyteller-participants who were interviewed for the prior research study. The essential premise is this: we remember things when they are part of a story. We remember better when the story is an oral story, a story told by heart, because our brains have to work hard to make sense of the words and to create the images. We remember best if the story touches our emotions, because emotional memory runs deep. Through story, the listener vicariously experiences the plight of the hero, and little distinction is made between real experience and vicarious experience. Anchor charts and bulleted lists have their places in education, but deeper essential learnings cry out for story.

In the research study, participants, all members of an Ontario storytellers' guild, had also been considering the value of place—not place value, a mathematical concept, but the importance of place, to story, to themselves as storytellers, because their own “place,” their long-time storytelling center, had recently closed and they were adjusting to a new venue in a different city. Place theory comprises sense of place, place attachment, and place identity. Place has the capacity to situate memory (Smith, 2007; Waters, 2010), a construct deeply understood by the Inuit (Van Deusen, 2008) and other Aboriginal groups (Benson, 2003; Corntassel, Chaw-win-is, & T'lakwadzi, 2009). Place attachment is strongly associated with sense of community (Long & Perkins, 2007). Such attachment develops from interactive experiences, especially repeated experiences when the locus is lost or threatened and the community draws together (Chamlee-Wright & Storr, 2009; Long & Perkins, 2007). Because Kairos' Blanket Exercise is a narrative that concerns the loss of place in the most essential of all definitions, home and homeland, it reflects, profoundly, the critical intersection of narrative and place that was the focus of the initial research study.

Introduction to the Project

The project study, the creation of a comprehensive kit to facilitate the implementation of Kairos' Blanket Exercise, evolved from the research study discussed above. Stories are of primary significance in First Nation, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) cultures. Stories have multiple dimensions, teaching as they do the history, the culture, the values, the roles of men and women, the importance of names and traditions. Such stories were largely misunderstood by the dominant western culture and trivialized as *legend* rather than *Legend*. Other stories, such as those of residential school experience, or starvation,

were long disregarded and have only come to have credence more recently as they are corroborated by government documents (Weber, 2013a, 2013b; The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012). These stories comprise a haunting untold history. One of the notions citizens cling to as a culture in Canada is of FNMI as the “other.” One of the ways this has been accomplished is by sequestering FNMI peoples on reserves that are, for the most part, far from our understood civilization. These reserves are only the smallest fraction of the lands FNMI peoples once called home, lost through manipulation and un-honoured treaty, taken, not given, rarely recompensed. The events that led to the loss of FNMI land are the focus of the Blanket Exercise and the story activity kit, designed to create memory affectively through experience. The Blanket Exercise is the experiential telling of the largely unacknowledged and little-known story of the loss of land to Canada’s Indigenous people.

The lead researcher, an experienced storyteller, was introduced to Kairos’ Blanket Exercise at a conference in July 2013 (Educating for the Common Good) just as she was completing the analysis for her research study. She recognized that the Blanket Exercise exemplified the powerful potential of narrative as described in the literature and by storyteller-participants, as well as its significant value as an introduction to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit content for the new (2013) Ontario Social Studies/History and Geography curriculum. From the feedback of other participants, she realized that minor adaptations would make the activity even more effective and memorable, and that the creation of an all-inclusive kit would make the story activity readily accessible to multiple schools, teachers, and students.

With the support of the itinerant teacher of the gifted, and the special education teacher at her school site, she trained a team of student leaders to facilitate the Blanket Exercise, under her supervision. She had the privilege of presenting the Blanket Exercise to the Waterloo Regional Aboriginal Academic Advisory Council (WRAAAC) for its feedback; this council is a local advisory committee comprising Aboriginal leaders, and superintendents from two boards of education.

The student team led the Blanket Exercise six times:

- For the students in each of the Grades 4 through 8 at the local school (including teachers and administration, as well as invited consultants and community members).
- For a workshop of identified gifted intermediate students from the local school board.
- For Education Week, before central cataloguing takes place, for parents, community members, and any students who missed the earlier presentation to their class.

The lead researcher led the Blanket Exercise, with the assistance of the FNMI Consultant, for the FNMI representatives, one from each school, as board-wide professional development, with the intent that once in-serviced, teachers would be familiar and sufficiently comfortable to then use the kit to lead the Blanket Exercise at their own schools. This ripple effect will ensure that the largest possible number of students have the opportunity to experience the Blanket Exercise, sharing the common narrative and thus maximizing its impact. Following this presentation, the kit was catalogued at the resource centre and made available for use.

Description of the Blanket Exercise

This activity is a full-participation, feet-on, story activity that teaches the loss of First Nations lands through a series of historical events and treaties. The activity was developed by Kairos Canada (2013), an interfaith group that has given full permission and even encouragement to use and adapt the exercise. The lead researcher experienced the Blanket Exercise herself, and from the feedback of other participants realized that minor adaptations would make the activity even more effective and memorable. The creation of an all-inclusive kit makes the story activity readily accessible to multiple schools, teachers, and students.

For the presentation, the floor of the classroom or presentation room is spread with blankets (or towels) that touch each other. The whole center area is covered. Participants are usually invited to remove their shoes and stand on the covered area, which represents the northern part of Turtle Island (as North America is known in some Aboriginal traditions). Maps indicate the various groups who lived on and used and shared the land before the arrival of the Europeans. Participants are assigned the role of the Indigenous people, the original inhabitants. Two or three volunteers assist the narrator/leader by playing the role of Europeans. Coloured index cards, shells, or coloured sticks are distributed, determining the fate of individual participants. As the exercise progresses, a series of descriptive statements and proclamations outlining historical events and decisions that resulted in the loss of the land are read by the Europeans. As land is lost, the Europeans remove or fold towels, and participants may be “relocated” or required to join others on their “land.” Certain proclamations result in towels being folded in half or into quarters, or even smaller. Others result in loss of life to participants, who move off the land to sit in a circle surrounding the ongoing narrative. Some participants are assigned to read statements (quotations) that express Aboriginal perspectives. When positive developments are described, the narrator

Storytelling to Teach Cultural Awareness: The Right Story at the Right Time

instructs that towels should be unfolded (a bit) to show signs of hope. By the end of the Blanket Exercise, the number of original inhabitants is much reduced, and the many fewer, much-folded towels vaguely resemble the reserves peppered across the land that was once proudly Turtle Island. Through this interactive story activity, participants come to a greater and more sympathetic understanding of the enormous losses to FNMI peoples, and become aware of how little land is left to them as reserves.

At the end of the exercise, participants sit in a circle around the once-blanketed area and reflect on the experience. Following one of many FNMI traditions, a talking feather is passed from participant to participant. Only the person holding the feather is permitted to speak (while the feather is in his or her possession), but participants have an opportunity to hold the talking feather and speak about their perceptions, impressions, experience, observations, or feelings. This organic sharing process has proved to be far more open-hearted and productive for participants than the written post activity.

Numerous student participants were shocked at the loss of land and to learn that many Aboriginals died of disease, as evidenced in their written post-activity responses:

- “I did not know that so many people lost so much land and that so many people died from different diseases. I’ll remember that the Aboriginal people only got a small amount of land after the settlers ‘took over’.”
- “I did not know that there was an island called Turtle Island that was getting taken over, and it started out really big and then they just kept losing land.”
- “I would describe it to someone who missed it by telling them that it was really cool learning about the Native people.”
- “I would describe the Blanket Exercise to someone who missed it and say it was a great and empowering (sic) touching experience and we should be grateful. They sent the kids to school and they could not speak their family’s language and they took it away. The land was Turtle Island.”

The objectives of the project study (the Blanket Exercise kit) are to create greater awareness and respect, and to recognize FNMI culture through the experience of the story. Stories are what human beings remember, and how they remember them (Haven, 2007). Ideally, the Blanket Exercise will continue to create a gateway to learning by providing an experiential context that is keenly remembered. As a result, teachers and students alike will read more deeply into the text as they explore the Social Studies/History curriculum. The Blanket Exercise supports initiatives and objectives of the *Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit Policy Framework* from the Aboriginal Education

Office at the Ministry of Education (2007), acknowledging a troubled past, and gently allowing for self-identification in a safe context, should that occur.

The kit for the Blanket Exercise includes scripts, scrolls, sorting mechanisms (coloured sticks, shells, feathers, stones, beads), talking feathers, capes (for the Europeans), and towels obtained through a grant from a teachers' union, Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA), under the Justice and Peace initiative. In cooperation with the FNMI consultant, and the itinerant teacher of the gifted, numerous groups have had the opportunity to experience the Blanket Exercise. The kit is catalogued at the resource center, along with clear instructions for its use, so that teachers who have participated in the professional development will be familiar with the kit and able to use it with the classes at their respective schools. As a result of its positive reception, additional kits are being created. The student team proudly assisted in numerous presentations at the school site. As a result of their work with the narrative, they have developed a deeper understanding of the content and its implications, and some of the students have demonstrated a keen interest in continuing to learn about Aboriginal history.

Educating Through Storytelling

In Western thinking, direct address is used to communicate important ideas in education, important concepts that must be learned. Educators learn to be explicit. The bulleting function on our computers is well used as we present key ideas in point form, leaving no doubt as to the main concepts. In Aboriginal experience, stories are more incidental, and the listeners, if their families still keep some of the old ways, or participate in some of their own cultural activities, are more greatly attuned to environmental learning:

Storytelling is used to teach children who they are, where they are from, what their elders know about the world and how to behave in it. Storytelling is one of the primary means for teaching children about appropriate Tohono O'odham behavior, as many stories warn children about the consequences of misbehaviour and the benefits of behaving appropriately. (Tsethlikai & Rogoff, 2013, p. 570)

Tsethlikai and Rogoff (2013) described the benefits of "learning through attentive involvement and contribution to family and community events" (p. 575). They found that children who participated in traditional practices, which included listening to traditional oral stories and teachings, had better recall for a story that was told orally, but indirectly. This recall is not attributed simply to the fact that these children might be

considered to be experienced listeners, but also to the fact that recent research seems to indicate that reading comprehension is enhanced by oral comprehension skills, as are oral and written expression (Berninger & Abbott, 2010). Experienced listeners would be anticipated to benefit most from learning through story, and hearing a story told by a skilled storyteller also enhances the experience, and leads to greater comprehension, impact, and consequently, retention.

Some of these stories will ultimately lead to the revelation of historical truths. Daschuk (2013) noted that when stories of sexual and physical abuse of First Nations children at residential schools were mentioned 20 years ago, some scholars suggested that the stories be taken with a grain of salt, believing, just as others did, that the stories of near-starvation and children who died in those places and whose deaths were never explained to their parents, were highly exaggerated. When students and others read histories that stated benignly: “the land was prepared for settlement,” it occurred to none that this meant an ethnic cleansing—that food was denied, despite treaty agreements that included food aid. Until this present day, many Canadians have discounted “reports of terrible housing conditions on reserves, unsafe drinking water, dismal educational outcomes, and...prison populations disproportionately stacked with Aboriginal inmates” (Daschuk, 2013, para. 8). We have not listened to the stories.

Just as master storytellers include folktales in their repertoires, and understand their essential nature in the storytelling, so too do Aboriginal teachers employ archetypes. These are paramount in the implicit teaching of cultural values, including “oral tradition, language, history, institutions, norms and values, territory, environment and ecology” (Atleo, 2009, p. 455). Atleo identified the seven principles of storywork from the Coast Salish First Nations Elders as “reverence, respect, responsibility, reciprocity, wholism, interrelatedness and synergy” (p. 455). Atleo used metaphoric mapping to examine the implicit themes in an Aboriginal tale as explored by these elders who explained to her that the function of grandparents includes their knowledge, guidance, and their example of how to conduct themselves. Knowledge tended to be gender-specific and not all grandparents or elders were knowledgeable about all things or even the same things. An understanding of the role of grandparents in the culture underlines the calamity of residential schools that resulted in the loss of grandparent wisdom and experience.

A Right Time and Place

A storyteller has the responsibility to tell the right stories at the right time and in the right place. This requires that the storyteller have a significant repertoire of stories,

and presumably many of the key stories of the culture, or at least stories with universal themes. It also requires the storyteller be proficient in the telling so that the stories have the necessary impact. Implicit is the requirement that the storyteller be sufficiently intuitive or attuned to the situation to know what is appropriate. Dion (2004) identified dual responsibilities: that of the listener to seek and find meaning in the story, and that of the teller to tell an appropriate story for the circumstances and the listeners. Ojibway Storyteller (2005) explained that Traditional First Nations storytellers were required to know the teachings of their own peoples and others, and to share the wisdom and the words of the past with the present generation for the future. The history had always been passed down orally, and before it ever was written down, the past and the traditional teachings had been learned word for word. The responsibility of the storytellers was to pass on the understanding they carried in their hearts and in their spirits in words that would inspire the next generations, the future chiefs and leaders, “the future clan mothers, and the future mothers and fathers” (para. 3). In the far too numerous situations where generation after generation was removed from their family, village, and culture, and sent away to residential schools with the express purpose that the institutions would “kill the Indian in the child” (Campbell, 2013), such traditional teachings were not passed on. The stories were not told at the right time; the stories were not told at all.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2012) explicitly states in their report, *They Came for the Children*: “This is a story of loss. Residential schools disrupted families and communities. They prevented elders from teaching children long-valued cultural and spiritual traditions and practices. They helped kill languages” (p. 1). The loss is all the more critical because in many cases the Aboriginal languages and dialects had not yet been codified. When the oral language was lost, the knowledge was lost along with it. The book describes the residential school experience and cites numerous FNMI individuals who share their lived experience.

Guerilla storytelling is a term coined to describe necessary storytelling. Guerilla storytelling requires that the teller have an extensive repertoire, and that it be accessible, ready to tell at a moment’s notice, suggesting that a significant amount of storyteller competence is required. Clarkson (2004) described a situation in which he was invited to tell stories to a government-sponsored group (CASCADE). His response to offer his pro bono services underlines the reason a storyteller tells stories in the first place: a storyteller believes in the power of story to heal the world. The coordinator was an experienced story listener who valued storytelling and story. The teller was an experienced storyteller with an extensive repertoire of traditional folktales and legends, as well as original work. While Clarkson (2004) did not use the word “magical,”

he strongly implied that this was a serendipitous experience of being exactly where he was meant to be and telling the right story at the right time.

King (2003) credits Okri, a Nigerian storyteller with having said:

In a fractured age, when cynicism is god, here is a possible heresy: we live by stories, we also live in them. One way or another we are living the stories planted in us early or along the way, or we are also living the stories we planted—knowingly or unknowingly—in ourselves. We live stories that either give our lives meaning or negate it with meaninglessness. If we change the stories we live by, quite possibly we change our lives. (p. 153)

There are families where members, not realizing that they themselves are of Aboriginal descent, hold negative views about their own people, unknowingly. Through the experience of the Blanket Exercise, participants develop a new appreciation of the unacknowledged, largely unknown, history of the land we call Canada, and may be better prepared to participate in meaningful dialogue through the healing process ahead. Negative life experiences are frequently suppressed, minimized, and silenced in fear and shame, but when a storyteller puts words and gives context to these hardships and redeems them, showing a path out of the labyrinth, an alternate ending (restorying), the listener who shares the story at multiple levels is affirmed and may begin the healing journey.

In her early days with the storytellers' guild, one participant, Connie,¹ not yet fully realizing that Stories Aloud was restricted to adults, once brought her teenage foster daughter because she felt very strongly that the girl needed to hear a certain story. Sonia had come to Canada with her family as a refugee sponsored by Connie's church. Her parents were struggling to raise their children in an unfamiliar culture, climate, and language, and Sonia became rebellious. When Sonia's father became ill, Connie, who had already raised her own children, took the teenager in. She wanted and was determined to have Sonia hear the story of the Porcelain Man, and felt no remorse that she had gone against the rules to accomplish this—especially since she had been unaware of the strictness of the *adults only* rule at the time of her transgression.

I was not sorry because I had brought Sonia for a very specific reason: because she needed to hear that story. One of the lines was: "Her father could control where she was but he could not control what she thought." And that applied to Sonia in her own life: they could control where she was, but not what she thought, and she loved it.

That two other storyteller-participants mentioned key stories that had the potential to help a person navigate difficult times is particularly interesting, especially because that question had not yet been asked in the interviews, yet there it was. The act of telling necessary stories is described by another participant, Angie, as “guerrilla storytelling.” Amber noted: “It is the responsibility of storytellers to tell the right stories. That’s a really serious responsibility. You need to be completely committed to telling the right story at the right time.” The idea of the power of story was expressed numerous times in just as many ways.

Lynn commented on the hunger for story:

You know, I think they are hungry for that, the talisman, that thing that they can take away. I don’t think that our culture has much faith in our children. We make everything explicit. We don’t have the sense that their own brains are capable of working out and their own souls are capable of striving, and they’re going to grow and change and go through things; they’re going to go on a journey, will suffer, and experience great joy. Stories that impart that faith. Unwanted, unfortunate, impoverished, go [on] a journey, be successful and find a different world. We don’t have faith that any of these things are going to happen for our children. Parents don’t give this message. I’m sixty, and it’s a message my parents and certainly my grandparents gave me: “You’re going to be okay.”

Storytellers appear to have been drawn to storytelling less for the sake of performing and more for the sake of the stories themselves. Amber explained it this way:

Stories attract me because I think that is where everything resides. In this digital age, if everything crashed tomorrow, [computers] it would be the storytellers who carry the wisdom of the world. I do think all the wisdom of the world is in stories, the humor, the cultural values, the lessons we need to know about life. Each culture carries its own stories, its own lessons. How we do things in this culture, and what is okay and what is not okay.

Recognizing the Story

As the lead researcher was analyzing the data for her research project, the Canadian news media was breaking the story that evidence of starvation experiments had been conducted on First Nations children at residential schools (Weber, 2013a, 2013b). Although it added credence to her position that suppressed stories would ultimately come forth, the news was devastating, heartbreaking. The news story, coming at the

right time, confirmed her conviction that the Blanket Exercise needed to be shared and promoted, that this story too, must be told. Told until it is known, told until it is acknowledged by Canadians as part of our history. With Canada's 150th birthday on the horizon (2017), there is a certain urgency.

Such an acknowledgment could lead to the beginning of the much needed healing between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures in Canada. In 1998, a delegation of Sahtu Dene from Déline, NWT, the village of widows, set an example and provided us with a model for a reconciliation. Although 50 years and more had passed, when these elders learned that the uranium from the mines in which their men, community members, had worked had been used in the Manhattan Project for the bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima, they determined to go to Hiroshima to visit the *hibakusha*, the explosion-affected people, to acknowledge the fact. Although they had lost many of the men from their own community (in many cases because of the handling of the uranium), and had suffered great trauma, and they had been completely unaware of their connection to events so far away, it was very important to the community that they acknowledge the truth. The delegation wanted to see that faraway place, and to speak to the *hibakusha* and tell them that they would never have participated in such an unimaginable atrocity had they been aware.

Perhaps, just as the Blanket Exercise offers the first step toward resolving our collective lack of awareness of the land we call Canada, the story of the Village of Widows provides an example of how to respond: to become informed, and to acknowledge to those affected that although we did not realize before, we now know what happened. And we will finally be able to acknowledge their loss. The Blanket Exercise may provide a template, or at least, the inspiration for a narrative means with which to teach about the Residential Schools, another long-suppressed story where place intersects with narrative. For as every storyteller and every seasoned story listener knows, one story has always led to another: the right story at the right time.

Note

1. All names are pseudonyms.

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An Important Reminder: Structuring a Classroom Environment That Honours All Students

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ABSTRACT

All children, regardless of ability, should feel valued and respected in their classroom. At times, the children who struggle miss out on purpose-driven, meaningful learning because they are classified by what they cannot do instead of honoured for what they can do. Through my narrative of Henry, I explore the importance of truly coming to know each student as a learner in the classroom. I begin by reflecting on my own experiences in school as a student and then as a beginning teacher. I then explore the use of the reader's workshop model and discuss how I have used it as an approach to differentiated teaching and learning in a way that creates space for relationships to grow and students to be supported. Finally, I conclude by revisiting my story of Henry and reflect on how his story, and implementing the reader's workshop model, will continue to affect my teaching as I grow both as a teacher and learner.

My Reminder

 It is posted. There behind my desk, it hangs. Attached to my white board along with many others I have collected over the years: pictures, notes, and cards from students, their family members, and special guests—this one being particularly special to me. At first glance you may wonder about its significance. The spelling is not correct and the letters are facing every which way, but this small bright blue sticky note and the words he used, his words, are the very reason why I come to work each day. His words serve as a reminder to me of just how privileged I am to be able to share in the lives of the children whom I teach.

At the end of the day, as I thought about Henry's¹ words, I was reminded of the teacher I once was. To say that I have been on an incredible journey throughout my teaching career would be an understatement. I began teaching seven years ago, although my path towards becoming a teacher began as far back as I can remember. As a young child I would play school with my siblings and I would admire my own mother as she spent time after dinner preparing for the day ahead. As I entered school, I was the student who stayed after class to help my teacher put up bulletin boards or tidy the classroom. I loved being at school and I knew from a very early age that this was what I wanted to do for my career.

Looking Back

I remember answering the phone as my superintendent offered me my first job. I was so happy, I cried. However, my first two years of teaching were not what I expected. You see, I began teaching in the way I was taught. The students learned from what I told them. We would follow our textbook's lesson and complete the activities the same way. I remember planning a Language Arts unit for my Grade 6 class at the time. We read, *Where the Red Fern Grows* (Rawls, 1961). When I handed out the unit outline to the students I had the marks determined per activity and everything was in a nice neat package. The students read each chapter and completed the accompanying assigned activity, aligned with the reading. This was how I taught. This was how my days unfolded. I had a plan and I believed my job was to put that plan into action. I viewed myself as successful when, at the end of a lesson or at the end of a day, everything went exactly as planned. Yes, I would ask how the students were or how their weekend went but in the pit of my stomach I knew I needed—and they needed—more. I felt stuck, like there was a barrier separating me from my students. I soon realized that unless I changed the way I taught, I would not make it in this career. I realized that in order for me to be the best teacher I could be for all of my students, I needed to truly know them. I needed to truly hear their stories. We needed to develop relationships with one another. What I had been previously doing certainly did not allow for my students and me to do this; we did not have the space to share our stories.

Challenging Past Perceptions

The bell is about to ring; a quiet hum fills the room. A group of children are circled around the floor sweeping up the pencil shavings, while others are rearranging the books on the back shelf, busily watering the plants, wiping the tables, straightening

the rugs, and putting away their supplies for the day. As my students get ready to go I remind them to share with me one way they got smarter today. We high five, hug, or cheer as each student celebrates his or her learning for that day. You see, as I learned through Miller (2012), smart isn't something you are, it is something you get. I want my students to know this, to live this, and I celebrate this with them each and every day they are at school.

Slowly the line of children dwindles and it is Henry's time to share with me. Before the school year started, I didn't know who Henry was but I had sure heard about him. He's the student that you hear about in the staffroom. "He's a handful;" "He's not reading at grade level;" "Watch out for him, he gets into trouble;" "He really struggles." These were the stories I was told. Over the past three weeks I have seen Henry in a different light. Henry is always happy to be at school. He is energetic and inquisitive, always asking questions and searching for answers. He is the boy who greets me each morning with a hug or gives me a rock he found in the woodlands. He is the boy who has devoured many of my animal books and comes rushing to me during our "enjoy a book time" to tell me how big sharks' teeth can get or how many stitches one man got because of a shark bite, while he points to the pictures or captions. He is the boy who read *Tough Boris* (Fox & Brown, 1994) over and over again, then sat patiently after school while he waited to read it aloud to the other Grade 4 teacher down the hall. He is the boy who listens intently to *Thank You Mister Falker* (Polacco, 1998), *Chrysanthemum* (Henkes, 1991), or *Amazing Grace* (Hoffman & Binch, 1991) and shares his ideas with us.

Henry comes to me with a sticky note in his hand, ready to tell me how he got smarter. He gives me the note and waits. As I read his words, letters jumbled and every which way, tears come to my eyes. "The more you read, the smarter you get." These are his words, his ideas, his learning. I give him a hug and ask him if I can post it on our *Community of Thinkers and Learners* wall. He beams, says yes, and leaves the classroom for the day. I am alone now, left with his sticky note, my feelings, and a reminder of the importance of a belief in children.

Who Can and Who Can't

Many times we classify and describe children only by what they cannot do, much like in the stories I had heard of Henry before his coming into Grade 4. Henry has his struggles, and school may never be easy for him. But he also has so many strengths that can be built upon once we take the time to know him as a person and get to know his story.

When I think of Henry's story of school I am reminded of my twin brother, James. His story of school was not as simple as mine. I was made for school; I loved it and did well. James did not. Out of the three children in our family, I believe he is the brightest but, much like Henry, he was often described by what he could not do.

James has a bright sense of humour that was often misunderstood. This tended to get him into trouble. He was described as distracted, impulsive, and slow to complete work. I remember in Grade 3, our teacher, Mrs. Simons, was reading *Charlotte's Web* (White, 1952) to our classroom. We were gathered on the floor around her when James raised his hand. "Mrs. Simons," he said. "You are a lot like Charlotte. You are kind and caring. The only difference between you two is that your legs are not as hairy." Much like Henry, he saw things and communicated his ideas intently but for some reason these thoughts were not fully recognized. As we got older, my sister and I both were on the honour roll, Kate going on to receive scholarships and bursaries throughout university. My brother did not graduate with me; he was put into modified programming and he had to go back one more year to get his Grade 12.

Dweck (2006) used the terms "fixed mindset" and "growth mindset" to describe how people view motivation and learning. People with a fixed mindset believe that talent determines success. While people with a growth mindset believe that even the most basic abilities can be developed through hard work and discipline. Although Dweck uses these terms as a way to think about personal growth and motivation, I also feel teachers can have these mindsets as they work to realize the abilities of their own students. I believe that teachers' mindsets about the children they teach often affect the success their students have in the classroom. I often wonder what would have happened had James been taught by teachers who had more of a growth, not a fixed, mindset (Dweck, 2006). Would the skills he brought to school each day have been celebrated and used to build his confidence and motivation? Would he have been truly taught and not judged (Dweck, 2006)?

My New Beginnings

It is important for all children to feel valued and respected. I believe that it is my role as a teacher to provide that for my students. This is something much more than a lesson plan can provide. It is embedded throughout all of our days together as a community. The sentiment, "Approach your students as great thinkers," is how I try to live everyday with my students. Keene (2008) questioned what would happen in our classrooms if we

approached our students as great thinkers. There are times within my own classroom that I ask myself, “Is this maintaining the integrity of my students?” Does this enable them to be great thinkers? As a beginning teacher, I know I did not approach my students this way. As a beginning teacher I was concerned with covering the curriculum but did not know how to do that in a way that honoured my students as learners and thinkers. As a beginning teacher I did not allow space for the knowledge that each of my students brought into the classroom each day. I did not see the connection between what children experienced at home and how that may have influenced how they lived out their days within the classroom.

Building Community Through Literature and the Workshop Model

Traditional classrooms are like corn fields. The farmer ploughs the whole field at one time. One type of corn is planted with a standard distance between the rows and between the seeds within the rows. Every row receives the same amount of fertilizer. Each plant should look about the same and will be harvested at the same time. A very simple structure. My classroom is more like a prairie. The grasses, insects, mice, and hawks co-evolve. Each species is dependent on countless others and also on soil and climate. A prairie is difficult to establish, but in place it endures a very complex structure (Wagler, as cited in Allen, 2009, p. 37).

Throughout the first few years of teaching, my classroom was like that cornfield. I was well planned and knew exactly where I wanted the students to be at the end of the day. This was how I viewed a successful day. My students were expected to complete the same tasks and it was my job to let them know how well they did. Much like the corn in the field, they grew and improved from the standard instruction I gave to them all. It is my hope that as I continue to learn and grow as a teacher, my class becomes less like a cornfield and more liked a prairie.

As it is important for me to hear the stories of my students and build relationships with them, it is also important that they grow to know each other in the same way. By structuring experiences that encourage children to build positive relationships with each other, they learn to negotiate their roles within our classroom community. Relationships need time to grow and evolve. I want my students to know that by working with and supporting one another they can accomplish more. It is not, “me, all powerful teacher; it is us” (Epstein & Oyler, 2008, p. 410). Like the grasses, insects, mice, and hawks that co-evolve, I want my students to know that we are all teachers; that we all learn from one another.

I believe that literature can be a very powerful tool used to build relationships with one another. Galda (1998) wrote about

...the potential power that is inherent in reading literature, a power that comes from both books and readers. This power enables readers to transform words-on-a-page into emotional experiences that function as mirrors and windows into our lives and the lives of others. (p. 1)

Stories give us the space and comfort to talk about situations, feelings, and experiences that may be difficult. There is something about sitting close with my students and reading a book with them that creates a sense of intimacy like no other time throughout the day. This intimacy is established as we begin talking and listening to one another, questioning each other about our opinions, and encouraging one another to stretch our thinking beyond the classroom. I get excited about discussing literature with my students while learning about their stories through the process. This is not easy work. At times I can feel overwhelmed and it can be difficult for me to step out of that role as “teacher” and into the role of “responsible responding” to my students, instead of asking them to follow me because I am their leader (Aoki, 2005).

Four years ago I began using a workshop model to teach language arts. Using this model enabled me to celebrate the diversity of each of my students while also giving them the differentiated instruction needed to be successful readers, writers, thinkers, and learners, regardless of their ability. Every student has the right to be asked to think and participate in meaningful learning and I believe that the workshop model honours that right.

As the teacher, I find it offers flexibility to differentiate instruction and provide meaningful interventions for all readers, from the most reticent reader to the most skilled reader. More important, I believe that it empowers students with the sense of time, self-authority, decision-making, and intellectual depth they need to foster their independence as nascent readers. (Allen, 2009, p. 81)

The workshop model is both predictable and consistent while allowing for flexibility and creativity.

It is significant to realize that the most creative environments in our society are not the ever changing ones. The artist’s studio, the researcher’s laboratory, the scholar’s library are deliberately kept simple as to support the complexities of the work in progress. They are deliberately kept predictable so the unpredictable can happen. (Calkins, as cited in Miller, 2008, p. 108)

Each of the workshop components invites purposeful teaching, talking, reflecting, and learning as students are asked to do what successful readers do, not just simply look for answers to the questions at the end of a chapter or draw a picture of their favourite part of the story.

The workshop cycle is separated into three pieces: crafting, composing, and reflecting. Through crafting, the students and I work through text together, focusing on a specific skill or strategy that readers can use to be successful. My students have the opportunity to learn from one another as they share their thoughts and opinions. “Every time we share a book with a class and discuss it, the book becomes a little bigger” (Galda, 1998, p. 3). Composing gives my students a chance to dig deep into their own books to make meaning of what they are reading. It is also my time to work one on one or with small groups of students who may need support or further challenges. This is my favourite part of the workshop structure. Sitting alongside my students and talking with them as true learners gives me the opportunity not only to get to know them in an academic light, but also get to know them as people. Because students have choice in what they are reading or working on, each student can work at the level that fits him or her. This is my time to touch base with students and show them that they are important to me and our classroom. It is my time to show them that their learning matters, their struggles matter, and their successes matter. Reflecting is our time to celebrate our learning for the day. My students get to know themselves as readers and share with one another successes and struggles they experienced. As we gather in a circle at the end of each class to share our learning, my students know that in our class we learn from one another. We are all teachers.

My Guiding Principles

Establishing the routines and structures needed to create and support the workshop model takes time and is not easy. Miller (2012) included proficient reader research, the gradual release of responsibility, creating a culture of thinking, building relationships, and establishing mutual trust as her guiding principles for the workshop model. Each of these components is needed for my classroom to be successful. Allen (2009) challenged teachers to think about what they are willing to fight for when creating a workshop environment for their students.

Over the past four years, I have spent a lot of time thinking and rethinking about what I am willing to fight for. This forces me to be a reflective practitioner as I negotiate and renegotiate my role within the classroom and the lives of the students I teach. I have visitors come to watch our classroom in action throughout the year (we call them our reader's workshop friends). As we debrief about what they saw and experienced during their visit, the classroom environment is always mentioned. This is one of my guiding principles. It is important that my students know that it is *their* classroom, not mine. It is *their* space for learning. In the room, everything is accessible to the students. The walls and bulletin boards are covered in their work, showcasing their learning or learning in progress. I am often asked about the ability level of my students. As I respond, explaining that like any other class I have a wide range of ability, the teachers often comment that they saw all students participating in meaningful learning and sharing. This is another of my guiding principles. I know that each of my students brings with them a lifetime of experiences different from their neighbour. Their experience, or inexperience, outside of the classroom will affect their life inside the classroom. However, I believe that no matter what each child brings to the classroom, he or she will be met where they are and nudged forward in a meaningful and purposeful way. As visitors look around the classroom they notice that, most often, the students are working with and reading different selections. Choice is important to the success of the workshop model. This is a third guiding principle. My students know that they are trusted to make the decisions they need to make to further their learning. This takes time and practice. We spend time discussing book choice and how to look for texts that meet each student's needs. Choice empowers my students and I am there to guide them. Finally, I am asked, "Do you do this every day?" My answer is yes. This is a fourth guiding principle. Children need time to think and to learn. Our mornings from nine to eleven are spent doing just that. I want my students to know that it is okay to sit and grapple with a question. I want my students to know that it is okay to read a book over again if they did not understand it the first time. I want my students to know that learning is a process that takes time; it is not a race. I want my students to know that I trust them to make the best decisions for themselves. I want them to know the importance of sharing our learning with one another and working with, not against, each other. Above all, I want them to know that I am here to support them along their way, no matter what their way looks like, and I will be here as they develop the tools they need to be successful learners and thinkers. Eisner and Vallance (1974) viewed curriculum as self-actualization, a stance which puts emphasis on personal growth and integrity. As I ask my students to reflect on their learning, I hope they begin to see their personal growth as an integral aspect of their learning.

Looking Forward

It is a beautiful Saturday afternoon in January and I am once again thinking about Henry. As I sip my cup of tea and gaze out my window, I wonder what our classroom would be like without him in it. I see, each and every day, the many ways he learns from his classmates and the ways they learn from him. I have seen his confidence grow as he shares with his classmates who he is as a learner and a person. Each day as he shares more of who he is, I get to see the puzzle come together. As I sit alongside him, I am better equipped to offer him the tools he needs to be successful. It saddens me to think that without participating in the workshop structure he may have spent a lot of his class time outside the class with an educational assistant or a special education teacher. It bothers me that he may have missed out on exactly what he needs—intense literacy instruction in a supportive environment that honours him for what he can do, not punishes him for what he can't.

Learning is more than memorizing facts or events. To be a learner is to know how to solve problems. It is to know how to work with one another and share ideas. To be a learner is to compromise while still being confident in your opinions. To be a learner is to make mistakes but be brave enough to solve them. I believe that the workshop model enables students to experience learning in this way.

The book *Chrysanthemum* by Kevin Henkes (1991) reminds me of the important role I have in responding to my students. Throughout the story the students make fun of Chrysanthemum because of her name, yet her teacher gives her very little support. As she is teased, poked, and prodded, "Chrysanthemum wilted." Every time her teacher said nothing, she wilted. This line is very powerful in telling how our actions or inactions as teachers can affect our students. I need to ensure that my students do not "wilt" on my account. I need to ensure that each and every one of my students blossoms in his or her own way and on his or her own time. In her concluding statement, Galda (1998) wrote, "The power of literature is perhaps eclipsed only by the power of teachers. What you do with the books in your classroom today will make a difference in the lives of your students" (p. 10). Reflecting on the power I hold as a teacher can be a scary thought. I hope to use the power I have as a means to empower. By teaching students to be proficient readers and fostering the development of their literary knowledge, while nurturing self-understanding and social responsibility, I can use the power I hold in the most beneficial way. By engaging meaningfully with text, it is my hope that my students will leave my classroom more confident, more knowledgeable, more empathetic, and more creative than when they entered.

There are stories I know as a teacher that I will keep close to my heart. These stories become not only part of who I am as a teacher, but also part of who I am as a daughter, wife, sister, friend, and mother. This story is one of them. Relationships with my family, with my students and their families, and those I have with individuals throughout the school, are truly important to me as I begin and end each day. As I continue on my journey, my story will follow me. As my life unfolds, complexities in the form of new relationships and new experiences will be added to my story. My story will evolve as will the stories of those who are a part of my life. Through teaching I have not only come to realize the importance of my own story, but also the significance of the stories of others. It is through building meaningful relationships with my students that I am able to truly hear these stories and walk alongside them as their teacher.

Note

1. Pseudonyms have been used throughout the paper to protect the anonymity of the individuals mentioned.

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An Important Reminder: Structuring a Classroom Environment That Honours All Students

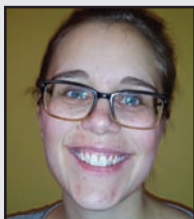
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Brenna Millard recently completed her Master's degree in Curriculum Studies at the University of Saskatchewan where she focused her research on the importance of creating a classroom community supportive of all learners. She has taught elementary students for seven years and is currently teaching Grade 4, where she gets to share her passion for reading and learning with her students each day. She lives in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan and gave birth to her first child in the middle of June.



Preparing Teachers for Inclusive Classrooms: Introducing the Individual Direct Experience Approach

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ABSTRACT

Inclusion is a contemporary educational movement impacting the role of the classroom teacher. As a result, teacher education programs have made attempts to incorporate inclusive education as part of their curricula. An analysis of the literature reveals that inclusion training has favorable effects on the attitudes of preservice teachers, but has little effect on their perceptions of preparedness to teach in inclusive classrooms. A common complaint is that the focus is heavily weighted on theory, as opposed to practical experience. To address such concerns, the authors recommend the Individual Direct Experience Approach (IDEA) as an innovative approach to preparing teachers for inclusive classrooms.

Introduction

With social justice at the international forefront of educational agendas, the inclusion of students with exceptionalities in the general education classroom has propelled a worldwide political and philosophical movement. In an inclusive model, students with exceptional needs are educated alongside their peers in the general classroom as the first placement option to be considered. The inclusion movement is an impetus for change, not only in educational policies, but also in the role and expectations of the classroom teacher. Inclusion has a tremendous impact on general classroom teachers as they are increasingly faced with the challenge of meeting a wide range of student needs through inclusive practices. More than ever

before, classroom teachers are required to understand a multitude of exceptionalities, manage a diverse classroom, implement differentiated instructional strategies, and make appropriate accommodations for individual needs. Not surprisingly, it has been found that the general classroom teacher has a profound impact on the success of inclusive education (Forlin, Loreman, Sharma, & Earle, 2009; Winzer & Mazurek, 2011); therefore, teacher preparation for inclusion is critical.

In response to the inclusion movement, post-secondary institutions have recognized their role in preparing preservice teachers with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to successfully manage diverse groups of learners (Ashan, Sharma, & Deppeler, 2012; Lancaster & Bain, 2010). There is an urgent need to equip teachers to work in diverse settings, and it is evident that most post-secondary institutions offer some form of inclusion training as part of their teacher preparation program. The following section outlines a selection of research, and captures recurring themes based on a comprehensive review of the current literature surrounding approaches to inclusion training.

The Impact of Inclusion Training

Preservice Teacher Attitudes

There is much evidence that inclusion training has a positive impact on preservice teachers' attitudes toward inclusion. Sze (2009) conducted an international review of the research in this area and determined that teacher education for inclusion brought an awareness of exceptionalities, which formed positive attitudes in preservice teachers toward inclusion. Additional research studies support these findings. For example, Sharma, Forlin, and Loreman (2008) conducted a large study with participants from five post-secondary institutions located in Canada, Hong Kong, Australia, and Singapore. The results found that single unit courses and infused approaches, where inclusion training is included in all course work, were both effective for espousing positive changes in attitudes. Kim's (2011) study also demonstrated increases in positive attitudes from both single-unit courses and an infused approach. Swain, Nordness, and Leader-Janssen's (2012) study found that a special education course, paired with 24 hours of field experience, significantly influenced positive attitude changes in preservice teachers. Lambe's (2007) study examined the changes in preservice teachers' attitudes after completing a post-graduate diploma in education in conjunction with a field experience. The results indicated that the program had a positive effect on preservice teachers' attitudes for teaching in inclusive settings and that the positive attitudes

significantly increased after the field experience component. A study conducted by Boling (2007) provided an in-depth description of one preservice teacher's change in attitude towards inclusion as she participated in an inclusion course combined with field experiences. At the onset of the study, the participant expressed feelings of confusion, concern, nervousness, and generally struggled with the idea of inclusion. A key turning point for her positive change in attitude was her field experience component, which allowed her to interact with students with various exceptionalities.

Based on a comprehensive analysis of the literature, there is a vast amount of research on the impact that inclusion training has on preservice teacher attitudes and a general consensus in the field that teachers feel positively about the idea of inclusion.

Perceptions of Preparedness

While positive attitudes may be able to transcend philosophical barriers to inclusion, they may not always translate into feeling prepared for the reality of inclusive teaching. For example, a review conducted by Avramidis and Norwich (2002) concluded that although most teachers held positive attitudes toward inclusion, teachers did not feel prepared for teaching students with exceptional needs, especially in the case of students with severe learning difficulties and behavioral/emotional disorders. A qualitative study conducted by Fayez, Dababneh, and Jumiaan (2011) reported that preservice teachers held strong and positive attitudes about the philosophy of inclusion as an entitlement of children with special needs. However, when asked about their preparedness to implement inclusion, the participants felt their mandatory inclusion course, while adding to their knowledge base, only provided a very narrow understanding of practical skills. Another qualitative study found that a single-unit course on inclusion positively changed preservice teachers' perceptions about inclusion; however, participants overwhelmingly indicated that they still required additional knowledge and skills in order to "operationalize their changed perceptions and beliefs" (McCray & McHatton, 2011, p. 149). Hodkinson's (2006) study found similar findings and concluded that first-year teachers felt their preservice training provided them with a good understanding of the theory of inclusive education, however their understanding of the practical delivery was limited. Moore-Hayes' (2008) study reported that preservice teachers cited the need for more preparation and experience in order to feel prepared for working with students with exceptional needs. Additionally, in a study conducted by Forlin and Chambers (2011), the researchers discovered that a unit of study in inclusive education increased preservice teachers' knowledge and their confidence as teachers. In contrast, it also increased their levels of stress in teaching students with disabilities.

Conclusions Drawn From the Literature Reviewed

The selection of reviews and empirical studies provide evidence that while teacher training for inclusion develops positive attitudes and theoretical knowledge, the lack of practical skill development and exposure to students with exceptional needs have a negative impact on perceptions of preparedness.

These findings should be of concern for teacher educators. Although positive attitudes can create the right climate for inclusion, it is not sufficient for preparing future teachers for the realities of inclusive teaching. Burton and Pace (2009) suggested that having positive attitudes cannot compensate for insufficient preparation, while Lancaster and Bain (2010) concurred that a sense of preparation is not contingent on attitudes alone, but that preservice teachers must also feel they have the strategies and the capability to execute the necessary practices.

From this investigation it can be substantiated that there are obvious gaps in teacher preparation programs. Teacher educators should view these gaps as a major roadblock to advancing the actualization of inclusion at the very basic level: the general education classroom. To ensure a better match between teacher preparation and the realities of inclusive classrooms, changes to the current approaches are necessary and critical. Based on our review of literature and experience as teacher educators, we conclude that adding authentic practical experiences to the existing courses in inclusion will benefit preservice teachers. Practical supervised experiences will add a sense of preparedness to their positive attitudes toward teaching in inclusive classrooms.

Recommendations: Experience and Education

As a preamble to proposing a recommendation for teacher education for inclusion, it is useful to consider and discuss the meaning of experience and education. Decades ago, renowned philosopher, John Dewey (1938) defined traditional education as one that relies on bodies of knowledge that have been worked out in the past, and the chief business of teachers and schools is to transmit this information to novice learners. In traditional education, the focus of curricula design is on content and subject, and teachers are the knowing agents of the content while students are the receptacles for which to store this information. The information is taught as a static, finished product. According to Dewey, traditional education is critiqued for its imposition and funneling of adult knowledge on less experienced learners, resulting in a gulf between the

knowledge the teacher holds and the lived experience of the novice learner. This gulf is described as being so wide that “the very situation forbids much active participation by pupils in the development of what is taught” (Dewey, 1938, p. 19). Oddly enough, over 70 years later, this concept parallels the current concern in teacher education for inclusion.

Dewey (1938) attempted to explain what constitutes a “new,” progressive education in a positive and constructive manner, rather than simply rejecting the traditional education. Dewey asserted that amid all uncertainties, one permanent frame of reference exists: the organic connection between education and personal experience. Therefore, Dewey’s progressive education is centered on students acquiring knowledge from within and from experience, rather than from the outside through texts and teachers. This is not to reject teachers and theoretical knowledge (Dewey, 1904); the critique here lies in the process of transmission and the focus on the past rather than the present. Progressive education explains how a learner can translate static knowledge from the past into a potent instrument for the present through experience. In other words, experience closes the gap between the archived past and the living present—essentially it negotiates and narrows the gap between theory and practice.

This concept can be useful for designing programs for teacher education. We recommend that in preparing teachers for inclusive classrooms, teacher education programs should incorporate opportunities for direct experiences with students who have exceptional needs during field experiences. A recent study gathered opinions from 124 faculty members across the United States, where the majority considered field experiences to be a leading example in teacher training for inclusion (Harvey, Yssel, Bauserman, & Merbler, 2010). Not only is this the opinion of faculty members, but research also demonstrated that when teachers were asked about their most preferred methods of preparation for teaching diverse learners, they suggested that direct teaching experiences with students with special needs was favored (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Jobling & Moni, 2004). One study of early childhood preservice teachers found that inclusive settings for field experiences could link inclusive coursework and fieldwork (Voss & Bufkin, 2011). Moreover, Rose and Garner (2010) stressed the importance of practical, school-based experiences as an addition to the theoretical base of university inclusion courses. In fact, one of the leading researchers in this area argued that field experience opportunities and direct contact with students with special needs may be the “only meaningful solution” (Loreman, 2010) to improve inclusion training.

However, some caution and careful consideration should be put forth given that field experiences do not always offer the optimum environment for practicing inclusive skills. For example, Jobling and Moni's (2004) study revealed that some participants felt they had limited contact with the special-needs students during their practicum because they "always had an aide with them" (p. 13). Also, Atay (2007) postulated that not every practicum setting is a model of good practice and that factors and experiences vary greatly. Yet another study suggested that placement schools should have a sufficient number of students with exceptional needs in their schools, as criterion for selection, in order to ensure more interactions and hands-on experience for preservice teachers (Lombardi & Hunka, 2001). However, it was also recognized that it is often the case that the number of schools offering field experience placements is insufficient, leaving universities with little choice. Our own experiences as teacher educators confirm that when field experiences do not include specific guidelines for working with students with exceptional needs, preservice teachers often have limited exposure to—and practice with—these students.

A solution to this issue may be to develop a more systematic and consistent approach to field experiences through well-structured, meaningful expectations. Such an approach may ensure that preservice teachers are realizing the full potential of the field experience as a training opportunity for inclusion. One such approach is the Individual Direct Experience Approach.

Individual Direct Experience Approach

The Individual Direct Experience Approach (IDEA) was developed by the first author, through her work with preservice teachers, as a systematic, meaningful approach to teacher preparation for inclusion (see Figure 1). IDEA is designed to be implemented during a preservice teacher's field experience, ideally an extended field experience of six to 12 weeks. It consists of having preservice teachers work individually and directly with one student with exceptional needs, as a living case study, throughout the duration of their field experience. Essentially, IDEA allows preservice teachers to experience direct interactions with a student with exceptional needs and to apply the knowledge and skills learned from these interactions to make appropriate adaptations or modifications to whole class lessons. This scaffolded process allows preservice teachers to understand the "how" and "why" of differentiating instruction and make accommodations for exceptional learners. The primary objectives of IDEA are to develop practical inclusive teaching skills and to allay preservice teachers' anxieties regarding working with students with exceptional needs. The specific expectations of

IDEA are presented below, and an illustrative example will demonstrate the application of IDEA to a field experience.

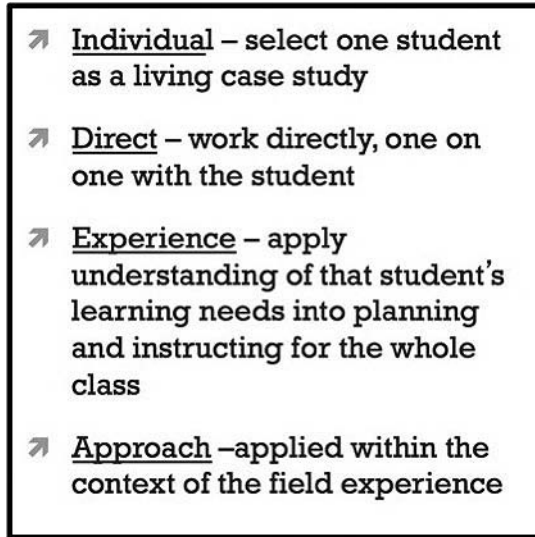
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- **Individual** – select one student as a living case study
 - **Direct** – work directly, one on one with the student
 - **Experience** – apply understanding of that student’s learning needs into planning and instructing for the whole class
 - **Approach** – applied within the context of the field experience

Fig. 1: Individual direct experience approach for teacher preparation for inclusion

Expectations of IDEA

IDEA requires preservice teachers to choose one student with exceptional needs from their classroom placement as a “living case study” during their field experience. The criteria for selecting students are that they have unique educational needs and require differentiated instruction or other forms of adaptations or modifications. It is certain that in every classroom at least one student can be identified, in consultation with the mentor teacher, as an appropriate living case for IDEA. After the living case is established, the preservice teacher is expected to fully and deeply understand the individual education plan (IEP) and/or the learning profile of this student, including prior educational experiences and assessment. Preservice teachers are also required to research the student’s exceptionality and communicate with the student’s teacher, teacher assistant, parents, and other members of the school support team in order to have a global understanding of the student. Following this background research, the key expectation is for the preservice teacher to engage in individual, direct experiences with the student for the duration of his or her field experience. A recommended frequency of the interactions would be two to three times per week for 15- to 30-minute sessions. Examples of interactions include guided literacy, individual conferencing, and

direct instruction. Preservice teachers will keep a descriptive log and journal describing the direct experience interactions. Journal entries should include reflections about what works, what does not, and how the student learns best. There should also be opportunities for collaboration with the mentor teacher, university facilitator, and with other colleagues and preservice teachers. With IDEA, preservice teachers will be expected to plan and teach whole-class lessons up to a maximum of 80% of the instructional day in order to provide time for the individual interactions.

Prior research has demonstrated that direct experience with exceptional-needs students during training increases preservice teachers' preparedness for teaching in inclusive classrooms (Burton & Pace, 2009; Forlin et al., 2009; Jung, 2007, Voss & Bufkin, 2011). Peebles and Mendaglio's (2014) study demonstrated that, during a field experience, as preservice teachers spent more time with direct, individual instruction with students with exceptional needs, and less time with observation and whole-class instruction, their self-efficacy for inclusive teaching was more likely to increase. IDEA differs from other approaches that use experience as a form of preparing teachers to work with exceptional students. For example, some programs have made attempts with "simulated" student case studies as a component of inclusion courses; however, it is acknowledged that the artificiality of the situation is itself a limitation (Pearson, 2007). Other programs have included practical experiences in the form of instructional tutoring (Burton & Pace, 2009), after-school programs (Lancaster & Bain, 2010), community involvement (Chambers & Forlin, 2010), and visits to classrooms to work with groups of gifted students (Chamberlin & Chamberlin, 2010). However, these programs did not provide the opportunity to subsequently teach these students within the broader context of a whole-class setting, which is the crux of effective inclusive teaching. A fictionalized illustrative example, based on the authors' experiences with preservice teachers, will demonstrate how IDEA can be applied.

IDEA in Action

Kim (all names are pseudonyms) is about to begin her nine-week final field experience in a grade three classroom. Many emotions run high, including her excitement to meet her students and her mentor teacher, Mr. Smith. Kim is also very nervous. She does not have a lot of experience working with children, and she has no prior experience with students with exceptional needs. She has talked with many of her classmates and their concerns are similar: Will I be able to manage and meet the needs of a diverse range of abilities and exceptionalities? I really want to include all students in my classroom activities, but can I really do it?

As part of Kim’s field experience, she is expected to choose a “living case study” in order to work directly with a student with exceptional needs. In her first week, with the help of Mr. Smith and the permission of the student’s parents, Kim chooses Dillon. Dillon is an eight-year-old autistic boy and requires a full-time teacher’s assistant, Mary. Mr. Smith feels that if Kim can understand Dillon’s learning needs and behaviors, she will have a much easier time including him in her lessons. Mary is thrilled with this new approach. She shared with Kim that last year Dillon was often excluded from whole-class lessons because the mentor teacher felt he was “too much work” for the student teacher—and that Mary could easily “look after” him during lessons.

During the first week of her field experience, Kim reads Dillon’s comprehensive IEP, researches autism, talks to Mary and Mr. Smith, and meets Dillon’s parents. After meeting his parents and hearing their story, Kim clearly understands the importance of meaningfully including Dillon in the classroom with his peers. She learns that Dillon’s parents’ main goals for him are to learn appropriate social skills, make friends, and learn to communicate with his iPad. She also observes Mary working with Dillon and begins to understand how to communicate with him and how to anticipate situations that cause frustration. She also learns that Dillon has a great number of strengths; he has a sense of humor, loves cars and trucks, and has a strong visual memory.

During this first week, Kim also observes her mentor teacher teaching the whole class and begins to plan for the classes that she will be taking over. The expectation is that she will take over approximately 80% of the classroom teaching by the halfway point in her field experience. While Mr. Smith is teaching the other 20% of instructional time, Kim has opportunities for her direct interactions with Dillon.

Over the remainder of her field experience, Kim spends approximately two 30-minute sessions with Dillon each week. The interactions take place within the classroom where Kim works directly with Dillon on a specific skill or with his communication program on his iPad. At one cohort meeting with her university facilitator, Kim expresses how valuable she feels the direct experience has been. “I am so comfortable interacting with Dillon. I’ve learned how to communicate with him on his iPad, and I can see that routine and structure are very important.” Kim continues to share what she has learned about Dillon’s communication skills, social skills, and his sensory therapy. “I feel that I can effectively plan modifications to my lessons in order to meaningfully include Dillon in the activities.”

Near the end of her field experience, Kim is observed by her university facilitator while teaching a science lesson on rocks and minerals. The lesson includes interactive

learning centers where the students were asked to classify rocks. Dillon is included with a small group of students. This group is given a cue card that Kim has prepared with “yes”/“no” questions that Dillon can answer on his iPad. At one point during the lesson, Kim intuitively moves Dillon to another group in order to remain longer at a particular center that she knows he is enjoying. Kim later explained that she knew the quick changing of centers would likely frustrate him as she has a very good grasp of what triggers some of his behaviors.

On Kim’s final day, she discusses with Mr. Smith the benefits of the living case study expectation of her field experience. She expresses how the individual, direct experience eased her anxiety about working with students with exceptional needs. She also feels that she could translate what she has learned about inclusive teaching practices to other students with exceptional needs within her own future classroom. Mr. Smith agrees that the systematic approach was an effective way to connect the theory of inclusive practice to the realities of the classroom.

Conclusion

There is a consensus that best practice for preparing teachers for inclusion is a pressing issue for teacher educators. Field experience is an essential ingredient for teacher preparation, including the preparation of teachers for the inclusive classroom. While experience with students with exceptional needs has been accepted as benefitting preservice teachers, it is not always intentionally incorporated into field experiences. IDEA is an approach to systematically introduce preservice teachers to teaching in the inclusive classroom. Not only does IDEA provide preservice teachers with the opportunity for interacting with students with exceptional needs, but it also requires that knowledge gleaned from these interactions will be implemented in whole-class instruction. As such, IDEA represents a closer approximation of the demands of the inclusion classroom than isolated direct experiences. In addition to providing guidance as to how inclusion is practiced, anxiety about working with students with exceptional needs may be lessened.

Future research in this area could address some of the potential limitations or unanswered questions related to IDEA. For instance, it would be valuable to research how the impact of IDEA applies to other inclusive settings, as student demographics vary greatly from classroom to classroom. Also, to provide validation to the approach, longitudinal studies could determine if the impact of IDEA is sustainable as preservice

teachers enter the profession and progress through their careers. Qualitative studies could provide insight into the experience of IDEA and the nature of the impact on preservice teachers' preparation for inclusive teaching. Given the existing research in this area, IDEA is a promising starting point for structuring intentional direct experiences into inclusion training for future teachers.

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Using a Bio-Psycho-Social Approach for Students With Severe Challenging Behaviours

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ABSTRACT

What teachers learn about classroom management in education classes often results in behaviour strategies that do not account for the individuality of each student. Teachers would benefit greatly from a common formula for effective problem solving and decision making with regard to choosing when to use the strategies in their “tool box.” The solution proposed is the building of an individual biopsychosocial, multimodal profile for each student with chronic challenging behaviours.

A Flexible Strategy for Successful Classroom Management

Imagine for a moment that a classroom can be compared to the creation of a salt-water fish tank, with all of the delicate needs of the different salt-water fish in a single tank. Preserving and maintaining this fragile environment would require specific knowledge of the individual needs of the various types of fish, along with an understanding of the required elements or resources that each fish, such as coral reefs, crustaceans, saltwater plants, anemones, specific kinds of water filtration, and carefully considered water chemistry. After all of the environmental “engineering,” a marine ecosystem would be created that would require constant monitoring for problems and a quick response time for modifications in order for the fish to remain alive. Only a devoted aquarist, who considered the individual needs of each fish, could manage a salt-water tank that includes both hardy fish as well as delicate fish with special aquarium needs.

Keeping that example in mind, today's classrooms are replete with learners whose diverse nature is reflected by differences in their cultural, cognitive, developmental, linguistic, preexisting knowledge, and learning preferences needs. Implementing differentiated instruction can seem near impossible because addressing learning needs is often overshadowed by problem behaviour in the classroom. With the wrong classroom dynamics, challenging behaviours can often take up the majority of teachers' time. Effective teaching practices must include using effective classroom management procedures that respect students' diverse needs, while concurrently promoting student engagement and motivation. This kind of outstanding expectancy of teachers requires a solid plan that can withstand even the most difficult of students. The formula described below is set within the framework of differentiated instruction but uses a biopsychosocial, multimodal approach leading to a precise functional behaviour analysis that can, in turn, be relied on by teachers and specialized educators alike.

The Components

- Implementation of a *biopsychosocial multimodal plan* (Griffiths, Gardner, & Nugent, 1998) for all chronically inflexible children
- Individualized problem solving for solutions to difficult behaviour by using a *functional behaviour analysis* that is based on the multimodal plan. Decisions are made based on *why* the behaviour is occurring or what is *maintaining* the behaviour
- The continued pursuit of professional development opportunities to maintain a "tool box" of currently advised, evidence-based strategies for diverse and difficult students

The Biopsychosocial Multimodal Plan Adapted for Teachers

The biopsychosocial model was coined by Roy Grinker in the 1950s (a neurologist and psychiatrist; see also Grinker, 1964) and later applied to general medicine by Dr. George Engel, a specialist of functional gastrointestinal disorders. Engel was considered to be the founder of this approach. The biopsychosocial approach (Engel, 1977, 1980) was designed to consolidate interacting components from three fields into the assessment and treatment of medical health problems by emphasizing the importance of understanding human health in a holistic context. Using a biopsychosocial perspective, complex behaviour can be considered as a result of multiple causes. This model was intended as a general health care delivery model but is used most often

by psychiatrists and developmental psychologists because of its humanistic approach. This model takes into consideration the complex nature of individuals and, with minor modification, is a perfect tool for teachers who are on the front lines of behaviour interpretation in the classroom. The biopsychosocial approach provides the foundation for accurate functional behaviour analysis—the only evidence-based method of analyzing difficult behaviour.

The bio-psycho-social approach systematically considers biological, psychological, and social/environmental factors, alongside their complex interactions. *Biological/medical* type factors include medical, psychiatric, and neurological states that can cause behaviour. *Psychological* factors include current psychological features (i.e., emotional, cognitive, developmental) as well as skill deficits that can influence how a student behaves. The *social/environmental* factors include family, cultural, interpersonal, school program factors, and physical aspects of the environment that can affect behaviour (Griffiths & Gardner, 2002). In order to predict behaviour outcomes and influence future behaviour, an understanding of the following is required: 1) the synthesis of *instigating conditions*, such as the social/environmental causes of the behaviour, 2) the child's *vulnerabilities* (psychological/biological/medical factors inherent in the child), and 3) the *reinforcing* (maintaining) factors that can influence challenging behaviour. Gaining this complex understanding of behaviour is a multifaceted task, which requires a purposeful multimodal approach to the assessment and treatment of difficult behaviours.

Using an integrated biopsychosocial approach for mapping a child's behaviour profile is referred to as the *multimodal profile* (Griffiths et al., 1998). The multimodal profile is based on the assumptions that not only are the individual contributions of each component significant (i.e., the biological, psychological, and social/environmental components), but the interaction between components also plays a critical role in understanding why behaviour occurs. A comprehensive treatment plan is based upon what is known about the component interactions, and is the result of completing a multimodal profile grid for an individual. (Refer to Tables 1, 2, and 3 for a sample profile). The discussion below posits that teachers would benefit greatly from an understanding and the use of a modified multimodal approach for difficult-to-manage students.

Components of the Multimodal Profile for a Student With Challenging Behaviours

Instigating conditions or precipitating factors. These factors, which result in the occurrence of challenging behaviour, may include aspects of the school, social, or physical environment (social/environmental factors) (Griffiths & Gardner, 2002). These conditions may act as *triggering factors* (antecedents) in that they precede the challenging behaviour. For example, let's hypothetically consider Adam* (*pseudonym), a student who is highly sensitive to sound. Adam may always react with challenging behaviours if the classroom is too noisy. Alternatively, other factors may act as *contributing conditions* in that they would not trigger the behaviour in isolation. Instead, they will increase the likelihood of the behaviour when several of the conditions have been combined. For example, Adam may also be affected by contributing factors. He may appear irritable or uncomfortable when these contributing conditions occur in isolation, but will only display challenging behaviours if several of the contributing conditions are combined. Specifically, if Adam is requested to complete a visually "busy" worksheet while he is fatigued and is sitting too close to another student, he may act out by hitting the student. If Adam arrives at school tired (his profile in Table 2 indicates periodic insomnia) but no other contributing conditions are present, Adam may work more slowly or appear uncomfortable, but will not display the hitting behaviours.

Other social/environmental features may include mismatches between the individual and the physical environment, (e.g., sensitivity to temperature, light, or seating conditions), the social environment (e.g., sensitivity to personality types or working in groups) or related to the school program (e.g., sensitivity to the amount of work requested, presentation of work, or level of difficulty of work). Refer to Table 1 as follows for a full description of Adam's *instigating conditions* related to social/environmental factors.

Table 1
Sample Multimodal Profile for Instigating Conditions
(Triggering and Contributing Factors)

Name of Student: Adam			
Behaviours Targeted:		Instigating Conditions	
1) Hitting 2) Screaming 3) Throwing objects		<i>Triggering Factors</i> (Always an antecedent)	<i>Contributing Factor</i> (Antecedents when combined)
Social/Environment Factors	Physical Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not having a work break every 10 minutes during seated work • Classroom too noisy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having to concentrate while being physically close to another student (other student becomes a distraction)
	Social Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with loud or forceful students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working in groups of more than two • Tolerating other students when fatigued
	School Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work is too difficult • If he perceives that he will not do well on a test or an assignment, he will act out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worksheet is too visually busy • Not having a calculator during math period

Modified from the *Multimodal Contextual Behavior Analytic Worksheet*: D.M Griffiths, W.I Gardner, & J.A. Nugent (1998). *Behavioral supports: Individual centered interventions — A multimodal functional approach*. Kingston, NY: NADD Press.

Vulnerability conditions, or risk factors. These conditions may include features of the individual (psychological or biological/medical factors) that place the individual at risk for problem behaviour. Vulnerability conditions may include skill deficits (e.g., poor expressive language or rote memory), cognitive deficits, psychological features (e.g., social anxiety, fear of failure), biological abnormalities (e.g., sensory sensitivities or difficulty sleeping), or medical/mental health diagnoses (e.g., epilepsy, ADHD, or autism). Vulnerability conditions increase the likelihood of challenging behaviour in the classroom.

Table 2
Sample Multimodal Profile for Vulnerability Conditions
(Psychological and Biological/Medical Factors)

Name of Student: Adam	
Psychological Features <small>(includes cognitive, emotional, and developmental features and skill deficits)</small>	Vulnerability Conditions
	Presenting Features
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty paying attention for periods longer than 10 minutes—this is pronounced when fatigued • Social anxiety • Fear of failure • Poor rote memory • Cannot always communicate his desires and needs effectively
	Skill Deficits
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missing social skills • Missing problem-solving skills
(Biological) Medical or Mental Health Diagnoses	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language disorder • ADHD, predominantly inattentive type • Epilepsy • Periodic insomnia • Sensory impairments 	

Modified from the *Multimodal Contextual Behavior Analytic Worksheet*: D.M Griffiths, W.I Gardner, & J.A. Nugent (1998). *Behavioral supports: Individual centered interventions — A multimodal functional approach*. Kingston, NY: NADD Press.

Reinforcing conditions. The likelihood of the student displaying challenging behaviour is further influenced by the consequences that arise after the behaviour has occurred. Consequences that increase the likelihood of the behaviour occurring are described as *reinforcing conditions*. Consequences that increase the likelihood of the behaviour occurring when something is *added* to the environment are *positive reinforcers*. Consequences that increase the likelihood of the behaviour occurring when something is *removed* from the environment are *negative reinforcers*. For example, consider the planned consequence for Adam, the child discussed, if he were to be removed from the classroom (sent to the office) each time he hit another student. This consequence may be reinforcing the hitting behaviour (if Adam is trying to avoid having to complete his work), making the removal from class a negative reinforcer. On the other hand, if an unplanned consequence is that the children in the class laugh at

the situation (and Adam enjoys being the class clown), then this addition to the situation (laughing) is a positive reinforcer. The teacher will have to manage these reinforcers (both positive and negative) in order to extinguish the hitting behaviour.

Table 3
Sample Multimodal Profile for Reinforcing Conditions
(Positive and Negative)

Name of Student: Adam			
Consequences:		Reinforcing Conditions of Difficult Behaviour (Occurring immediately after the challenging behaviour is observed)	
		<i>Positive</i> (Something is added/provided)	<i>Negative</i> (Something is taken away/removed)
Social/Environment Factors	Physical Environment	No positive reinforcers identified yet for the physical environment	Adam is removed from the group and permitted to work individually, at his desk
	Social Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students laugh at Adam's misbehaviour, a desired response by Adam who loves this attention Adam is immediately provided with one-on-one support and he is an attention seeker 	Adam is immediately removed from the classroom and thus from having to work
	School Program	Adam is immediately provided with a calculator or other program supports	Work is removed or simplified

Modified from the *Multimodal Contextual Behavior Analytic Worksheet*: D.M Griffiths, W.I Gardner, & J.A. Nugent (1998). *Behavioral supports: Individual centered interventions — A multimodal functional approach*. Kingston, NY: NADD Press.

Challenging behaviour is influenced by the dynamic interplay among *instigating factors* (triggers and contributing), *vulnerability factors* (psychological and biological/medical), and *reinforcing factors*. Let's again consider the child, Adam who has challenging behaviour (e.g., hitting) discussed throughout the text, and use his multimodal profile grid (displayed in Tables 1-3) to examine how a teacher may proceed to engineer this particular student's environment and program his day-to-day schoolwork. The multimodal grid, once complete, acts as a checklist of things for the teacher to do to prevent the difficult-to-manage behaviour from occurring. Often teachers are aware of some of the factors in the multimodal grid but have never completed a full multimodal profile, which considers the interplay between each factor.

Regarding reinforcing conditions. For preventive purposes, the teacher might first remove all negative and positive reinforcing conditions that are sustaining Adam's difficult-to-manage behaviours. She would likely begin by working to prevent the children from laughing at the student's hitting behaviour by applying unwanted consequences. She might then apply planned consequences for the misbehaving child within the classroom (instead of reinforcing the desire *not* to work by sending him out of the class), and she would likely apply appropriate classroom supports as preventative measures before the behaviour occurred. Her decisions would be made by examining Adam's multimodal profile, which outlines Adam's needs and also what sustains the hitting behaviour.

Next, Adam's teacher might examine how the biological, psychological, and social/environmental conditions are interacting with each other by again examining the multimodal profile (refer to Tables 1-3). If necessary, the teacher could initially request support from the resource teacher, psychologist, and/or school consultant, depending on the severity of the challenging behaviours and the complexity of the multimodal profile. For example, Adam's multimodal profile indicates that he has a diagnosis of ADHD and without frequent breaks, his challenging behaviour is triggered. His teacher might choose to structure his day to include several planned work breaks. These breaks could include handing out papers, collecting work, and cleaning the board or delivering notes to other teachers, in order to combat the child's difficulty paying attention for long periods. Given other aspects of Adam's profile (refer to Tables 1-3), his teacher would need to ensure that any work requested was well matched to his cognitive level and presented in a manner that is not visually overwhelming. Adam's profile indicates that he has a language disorder that affects his ability to communicate effectively. This may be an additional reason why he does not enjoy working in groups. He may require extra support in getting his ideas across to his classmates. The teaching of skills that Adam is lacking (i.e., social skills and problem-solving skills) could also be based on the multimodal profile, as these skill deficits contribute to Adam's misbehaviour.

Mathematic teaching objectives would likely be related to Adam's problem-solving skills deficit. A calculator could be provided for individual work, based on Adam's difficulty with rote memory, clearly outlined in his profile (Tables 2-3). It is clear the child has social anxiety, which is related to a delay in social development, and thus in his repertoire of social skills. This is not uncommon for children with significant difficulties maintaining their attention. A plan for social skills learning should be made in conjunction with Adam's parents and the teaching team of the child. Within the classroom, the teacher could facilitate Adam's social-skills deficit by managing how group work is completed in class, perhaps by providing appropriate roles to students,

based on their individual profiles of strengths and weaknesses (also facilitating differentiated instruction).

Regarding social/environmental conditions (triggers and contributing factors).

The teacher would also have to act “on the spot” to change aspects of the environment, if contributing factors were evident. We know that for Adam these factors include being fatigued, having to work close to other students when concentration is required, working in groups, using worksheets that are visually “busy,” and completing math work without a calculator (indicated on Table 1). Therefore, if Adam arrived at school looking fatigued (see Table 2; Vulnerability Factors, which indicates he has periodic insomnia), all other contributing factors, such as having to work close to another student during more difficult work assignments or participating in group work, would not be possible that day. Knowing the contributing factors would significantly reduce behaviours: First, by knowing when the student is particularly vulnerable to having challenging behaviour. Second, by knowing which factors must be eliminated when the student is vulnerable. Removing all triggers (conditions that always lead to challenging behaviour) in this case, working with students who have imposing personalities, would imply a particular seating arrangement and avoiding group work with these types of students on a daily basis.

Regarding psychological conditions. Adam’s multimodal profile (Table 2; Vulnerability Factors) indicates that he has, among other factors, social anxiety, poor rote memory, and a fear of failure. In consideration of this psychological profile, once the initial classroom engineering was completed, the teacher might choose to incorporate a program wherein each classroom lesson ended with five minutes devoted to the teaching of how mistakes lead to better products and increased learning. The teacher could discuss examples from the particular lesson to support the generalization of how failure is not the result of making mistakes. Such a program (which would require only minimal extra planning time) would benefit all students and would be worth the effort for this particular student whose fear of failure contributes to his challenging behaviour.

With time and, in some cases, initial support from a specialist or professional, a teacher could provide an environment that is a “best fit” for even the most challenging of students. Realistically, this would not mean that the child, for whom the multimodal profile was created, would no longer have difficult-to-manage behaviours. Instead, a large number of the behaviours could be prevented. Remaining behaviours could be explored in a functional behavioural analysis (FBA), an expected process for teachers to follow when they are stumped by a behaviour that a student is exhibiting.

A functional behavioural analysis, developed in the field of behavioural psychology, employs fundamental principles of operant conditioning in order to determine the reason why particular behaviour is persisting. The goal of such an analysis is to make hypotheses about the purpose or motivation for a behaviour and then to test the hypothesis. If the hypothesis is correct, the behaviour will cease once the motivation or reason for the behaviour is removed.

Table 4
Functional Behavioural Analysis Grid for Targeted Behaviours

Name: Date:	Functional Behavioural Analysis Grid for Targeted Behaviours	
Describe Behaviour Targeted	Trial # 1 Name Behaviour: _____	Trial # 2 Name Behaviour: _____
Desired Objective		
Hypotheses (Reasons why you think the behaviour is occurring or is being reinforced)		
Trial Plan (Description of the trial plan and date of completion)		
Person Responsible		
Was the Plan a Success?		
Report Measureable Results		

To establish the function of a behaviour, the following must be identified: any triggers of the behaviour, any aspects of the student that influence or feed into the behaviour, and any consequences of the behaviour which are reinforcing the behaviour. All of this information is available in the multimodal profile of the student. Not having a multimodal profile for a student with persistent, difficult-to-manage behaviours makes any attempt to reshape or eliminate behaviours more like a guessing game. Each incorrect guess can have disastrous consequences for the teacher. Most teachers have a large “tool box” of strategies to manage difficult behaviours. What they don’t have is a method or formula for matching the strategies to the child or to the behaviour. Not all strategies for ADHD, for example, will work for all children with ADHD. Success rates for any strategy depend on the student’s individual multimodal profile. The reasons

why behaviours are occurring supersede any diagnostic label that the child may have been given. A diagnostic label is just not enough information to build an individual behavioural plan. This is well known in psychological circles, but the information has not been fluid between the disciplines.

There is strong theoretical and clinical support for the building of multimodal profiles that have a biopsychosocial approach for students with chronically challenging behaviours. Using such a plan, a teacher would be more confident in making hypotheses about why challenging behaviour is occurring and thus could be more accurate in solving behaviour problems. Additionally, any new causes of behaviour discovered during a functional behavioural analysis could be added to the multimodal profile. The idea is that the base profile is created only once, and only for students with chronic behaviour problems. As the teacher gleans new information, the multimodal profile is updated and continuously strengthens the ability of the teacher to manage the student's environment, and also to program his or her individual plan in a preventative and holistic manner. The teacher is in a position to better use her well-developed "tool box" of strategies for challenging behaviour, by having an improved ability to match her strategies to the reasons why problem behaviour is occurring in her classroom.

Conclusion

Just as education borrowed from the field of developmental psychology to support curriculum development, and, in turn psychology borrowed from the field of education by incorporating Gardner's (1983) proposed "intelligences" into the building of clinical learning profiles, we need to continue to keep knowledge between the disciplines fluid. Both disciplines should continue to influence each other and thus bring true meaning to the development of educational psychology.

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Autobiographical Narrative Inquiry: Tellings and Retellings

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ABSTRACT

Questions of diversity and inclusion are central to learning to engage in narrative inquiry. By engaging in autobiographical narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Caine, 2012; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), we tell and retell stories related to diversity. In doing so, we puzzle about inquiring in ethical ways alongside diverse participants. We tell and retell three stories in our efforts to break with the taken-for-granted in our lives. We draw forward resonances around the challenging, yet ethical necessity, of facing ourselves (Anzaldúa, 1987/1999; Lindemann Nelson, 1995) as we attend to the complexity of lives.

Introduction

This is, in part, an effort to gain perspective on our constructs and our categories, to break through what Dewey once called “the crust of conventionalized and routine consciousness.” My reasons for wanting to make this effort have to do with a desire to communicate a sense of how haunted I often feel, how badly I want to break with the taken-for-granted, to see and to say My interest in coping with diversity and striving toward significant inclusion derives to a large degree from an awareness of the savagery, the brutal marginalizations, the structured silences, the imposed invisibility so present all around. (Greene, 1993, p. 211)

 We revisited Maxine Greene’s (1993) words in the midst of discussing potentialities for this article. They compelled us to sit in silence for several moments as we felt the reverberations in our bodies and the spaces

between us. Greene calls us to fully attend to diversity in our research relationships, to “break with the taken-for-granted, to see and to say” as inquirers. We wondered about researcher-participant relationships, relationships where participants can be expected to conform to the researcher’s expectations. We wondered how to break with the taken-for-granted, how to make visible the unintended instances of “savagery, the brutal marginalizations, the structured silences, the imposed invisibility” as we inquire alongside research participants. Understanding diversity as the profound acknowledgement “that there cannot be a single standard of humanness or attainment or propriety when it comes to taking a perspective on the world” (Greene, 1993, p. 212), we puzzled about how we could ethically come alongside diverse participants in classrooms, schools, homes, community places, and in all the varied landscapes where lives and relationships are being composed.

Methodology

As narrative inquirers, we hold relationships central to the living out of our inquiries (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Huber, Clandinin, & Huber, 2006). Our puzzle in this article is shaped by this embodied relationality expressed in narrative inquiry:

People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which their experience of the world enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Viewed this way, narrative is the phenomenon studied in inquiry. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular narrative view of experience as phenomena under study. (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 477)

We bring stories of who we are and are becoming as teachers, students, parents, researchers, all of our “selves ... always in the making” (Greene, 1993, p. 213), with us into our inquiries. In this way, we understand that narrative inquiry is necessarily autobiographical: “Because narrative inquiry is an ongoing reflexive and reflective methodology, narrative inquirers need to continually inquire into their experiences before, during, and after each inquiry” (Clandinin & Caine, 2012, p. 171). Through the following autobiographical tellings and retellings into who we are and who we are becoming as narrative inquirers, we work to break with the taken-for-granted by

positioning ourselves within the metaphorical three-dimensional narrative inquiry space with dimensions of temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).¹ In exploring who we are and who we are becoming, in viewing ourselves and our participants as always in the midst of stories, we embody our ontological and ethical commitments to live and inquire alongside one another, relationally (Clandinin & Caine, 2012).

Telling Muna's Story

"For such a thin piece of fabric the hijab can be pretty weighty." Even as I spoke the words, I was aware of their disruption to so many of my lived stories. I was not surprised by the words themselves, for they were intentionally spoken. Rather, I was surprised at the very intentionality of their utterance. Where was my usual and purposeful silence of anything hijab-related ... especially on school landscapes? Looking around the Research Issues table,² a space I had become familiar with over the past year and a half, I continued speaking and discussed the weight of others' gaze and expectations—a weightiness I can *feel*—of what my hijabi-world should be, or is probably, like. As I spoke, the looks, nods, and murmurs of recognition narrated for me the sense of the rightness of their utterance. They narrated the sense that self or other-imposed silence does not dwell in this space.

Retelling Muna's Story

As a Muslim woman who wears a hijab (headscarf), this story gives a sense of a moment of profound disruption to one of my stories to live by³ (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) on a school landscape. I experienced an embodied sense of tension as I travelled back along the temporal continuum and recalled in-school and out-of-school places in landscapes of days gone by where I felt safety in silence. However, this sense of safety within silence is double-edged because, similar to Greene, I have often been drawn by a strong "desire to communicate a sense of how haunted I often feel ... to see and to say" (p. 211). I was further dispositioned as I inquired within the liminal spaces (Heilbrun, 1999) of this story to live by, experiencing a heady sense of unsteadiness, for I recognized that my silence has often been self-imposed, serving as a defensive wall to deflect harmful words, looks, and energy.

Vivian Paley (1995) reminds me that community-building necessarily involves finding ways to "explain who we are" (p. 57), and who we are becoming, to one another. As I turned to inquire into this expression of my stories to live by, as I inquired into who I am and who I am becoming in relation to and with others, I engaged in self-facing

(Anzaldua, 1987/1999; Lindemann Nelson, 1995). I wondered what stories I had silenced, and what silences I had created, for others in my chosen community⁴ (Lindemann Nelson, 1995) at the Research Issues table. In this moment of self-facing, I awakened to the ways in which my self-constructed barrier has, inevitably, prevented relational understandings woven within reciprocity and vulnerability, woven within one of my chosen communities.

I live in, shape, and have been shaped by, personal, cultural, familial, linguistic, social, and institutional narratives (Clandinin, 2013). While deeply personal, my decision to wear the hijab is also extremely visible and public, carrying with it a myriad of stories—stories that shift depending upon the eye of the beholder. Some of these stories hearten and sustain me; some confuse and irritate me; and some intimidate and frighten me. Although the stories shift depending upon the beholder, I often feel the weight of each beholder's single story (Adichie, 2009) of who/what I am and who/what I should be like in their stories of a woman who wears a hijab. I often feel their stories of me bumping up⁵ against *my* stories to live by, stories that are multiple, multifaceted, experiential, contextual, and always shifting. Feeling this weightiness and the bumping up of, at times, conflicting stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) caused me, over time, to construct a defensive wall of silence. I became accustomed to sharing the more intimate facets of my identity very carefully—with certain people, at certain times, and in certain places. This very much depends upon whether I feel safe.

Revisiting that Tuesday afternoon at the Research Issues table, I remember how feeling safe lowered my defensive wall enough to allow me to break the silence and tell my feelings related to the hijab for the first time ever on a school landscape. My sense of safety at that table space was developed and nurtured with time and in this chosen community. Engaged in self-facing during this extremely uncharacteristic moment of speaking, I am increasingly aware of the ways my self-imposed silence could profoundly shape my research relationships, and how they could be marked by unintentional “structured silences” (Greene, 1993). As I think about how to ethically live and inquire alongside diverse participants, how to honour our multiple stories to live by, Clandinin and Caine (2012) remind me that “it is important to understand narrative inquiry spaces as spaces of belonging for both researchers and participants; spaces that are always marked by ethics and attitudes of openness, mutual vulnerability, reciprocity, and care” (p. 169). My eyes linger on the words “mutual vulnerability” and I sense that I will continue to struggle against the urge to hide behind silence as I work to co-compose spaces of belonging alongside diverse participants. Looking forward to a multiperspectival narrative inquiry (see, for example, Chung, 2008; Houle, 2012; Huber, Murphy, & Clandinin, 2011) alongside Muslim children, their families, and teachers, I am

aware of the ethical *necessity* of struggling against silence, for how can I be fully present in a caring, open, and reciprocal relationship if vulnerability is a one-sided expectation?

Telling Jean's Story

I greeted Sean Lessard, a co-researcher on the Early School Leavers project, at my office door. Beside him stood a young man of Asian heritage dressed in jeans and a T-shirt that showed off his tattooed arms. I made eye contact with him as Sean introduced him as someone who might be interested in participating in the research. "Hello Truong," I said. I maintained eye contact, careful not to look at the multiple tattoos, knowing the tattoos were intentional markers on his skin and also knowing my questions or surprise in his appearance could shift the conversation away from his interest in engaging in the study. I was aware that I was an older white woman who worked in a university, while he was someone who had left school prior to graduating. Had I focussed on the differences that seemed so profound, the possibility of conversations would vanish. As we stood there in the office doorway, we gazed at each other and wondered—at least I did—about the ways a relationship might be composed. He agreed to participate.

Retelling Jean's Story

As I turn to retell this storied experience through narrative inquiry, I think about that moment of meeting, that moment when Truong stood in the doorway of my university office. I was nervous for the days and hours after I learned that Sean was bringing Truong to my office to meet me, for Truong to decide if he wanted to participate in our study. We needed participants and Sean was sure that we would learn from Truong.

I knew so little about Truong from Sean and had formed no images of him in my mind, except that he had left school before graduating. My earlier stories of who left school before graduating had already begun to crack open as the research team met many youth who challenged our too-easy, too-defined category of early school leavers, those we had initially termed school drop-outs. But in my experience in the doorway other images swirled in my mind. My experiences of growing up in a small rural farming community in the 1950s and 1960s did not include tattooed bodies. Skin markings were always the ones marked on bodies by birth or by accidents. No one intentionally engraved their bodies. I had, of course, since then, confronted many stereotypes of those who engraved their skins, but some of those were fostered in crime novels and sensational journalism. Those images also swirled in my mind. I knew though that it was important not to let those images formed in childhood and in reading be the dominant images expressed in the moment of meeting Truong. I knew he would already have

been judged and categorized many times by older people who saw him only as the bearer of tattoos—not as someone who was living a deeply complex life, which included leaving school early.

I felt nervous at the moment of meeting Truong, in part, because of who I was as an older, white well-educated woman but also because I knew that Truong would teach us something if he would talk with us. In that moment of meeting and making sense of who I was in relation with Truong, I confronted myself in a moment of self-facing (Anzaldúa, 1987/1999; Lindemann Nelson, 1995), seeing me as perhaps Truong saw me and knowing how I, too, was becoming, changing, reaching past and over categories to try to see Truong as a person with experiences. I was trying, as Adichie (2009) reminded me, not to see him as a single story, nor to see myself as a single story, but to see myself as if in the midst and to also see him as in the midst. I had intentions, a forward-looking story of desiring Truong to be part of the research. Truong, too, must have been in the midst of composing a forward-looking story. However, perhaps his forward-looking story was composed around loyalty to his much-loved teacher, Sean. But he agreed to meet me and consider being part of the study. It was a space with many possibilities in that moment as we negotiated who we were and who we might become in relation. As we gazed at each other, more unsaid than said, I was wondering if we could co-create a belonging space between us, a space marked by “attitudes of openness, vulnerability, reciprocity, and care” (Clandinin & Caine, 2012, p. 167).

Telling Jinny’s Story

The girl I knew in my Grade 6 classroom was bright, articulate, and possessed a mischievous sense of humour. Within what I perceived was a safe space, I believed she felt comfortable enough to enact a plotline which cast her as a strong female student. Unlike some of the other students in my class, she had no difficulty asserting her opinion when it differed from her peers. She was a natural leader, often taking charge during science class when students worked in cooperative groups, vying for lead roles in the dramatic plays we put on, and even volunteering first to read aloud whenever the occasion arose. However, not too far into the school year, her father informed me of his intentions to remove his daughter from my class and send her to a boarding school in India. His reasoning had been that she wasn’t learning what she needed to learn here in Canada. He wished for an obedient daughter, one who would not talk back. I understood moving to a new school away from her homeland, her family and friends would alter the spaces my student had found herself in, and I wondered how her lived and imagined selves would be shaped by the different landscapes she would now occupy.

Retelling Jinny's Story

As an elementary school teacher I was living out a Canadian school story of equality and safety. Within this story, my students were not merely encouraged but also expected to be treated equally, irrespective of gender. The dominant story of school (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) was that within the school, teachers were supposed to create safe spaces for *all* of their students. I held onto this story of school little realizing the danger I was courting in not being attentive to the possibility of *other* stories (Adichie, 2009) being lived out by those around me. As an Indo-Canadian teacher in a school with a predominately Indo-Canadian student population, I was fully vested in this particular dominant story of school. This insider's perspective I believed I held, one which I took for granted (Greene, 1993), should have inoculated me against the nuanced tensions which seemed to arise between my non-Indo-Canadian colleagues and their students. After all, they did not understand why their students often sought out the peach-coloured crayon to shade in their self-portraits. My fellow teachers did not understand why some parents did not wish for their daughters to play with boys during gym and recess. Nor could they understand why many of the students referred to adults (sometimes strangers) as "aunties" and "uncles." I felt I understood where these children were coming from—that I *got them* and that this inside knowledge I possessed situated me in a better place than my colleagues in our work as teachers. It was only later, upon re-entering the university landscape as a graduate student, that I was awakened (Greene, 1995) to how storying my students, my colleagues, and my peers along such unyielding plotlines was simply another iteration of picking up the peach-coloured crayon. In effect, I was colouring over the diverse stories of the very people I hoped to come alongside in my teaching.

As a doctoral student I am learning to inquire narratively into my stories to live by. These are stories which Clandinin et al. (2006) suggest, "are multiple, fluid, and shifting, continuously composed and recomposed in the moment to moment living alongside children, families, administrators and others both on and off the school landscape" (p. 9). Holding the mirror up to my stories to live by had shattered the story I held of myself as a culturally sensitive teacher. Heilbrun (1988) helps me to recollect, "We tell ourselves stories of our past, make fictions or stories of it, and these narrations *become* the past" (p. 51[original emphasis]). Coming face to face with myself, new knowings emerged from amongst the fragmented pieces of my old knowings (Anzaldúa, 1987/1999) and I wondered, like Paley (1979/2000) before me, "How much does it matter if a child cannot identify ethnically or racially with a teacher? Does it matter at all?" (p. 35). Certainly, in facing myself (Anzaldúa, 1987/1999; Lindemann Nelson, 1995), I saw that I had been writing over the familial stories of the young girl in my class and had not bothered to cast a focused eye upon the stories I silenced. In his conversations with me, I soon

learned that despite some shared cultural background, my student's father did not see me as an appropriate role model for his daughter. What he viewed as negative traits in his daughter I saw as positive ones. His story of his daughter bumped up against the one I had of her which honoured her as an intelligent, articulate, and creative student. Her parents and, in particular, her father, had created a plotline of their daughter which framed her as the disobedient daughter.

Slipping in and out of time, inquiring into my stories of school and family affords me a liminal space (Heilbrun, 1999) to dwell whereby I can continue to shape and re-shape my understandings of what it will mean to ethically inquire into the experiences of my future participants. I am drawn closer to narrative inquiry with its dual ontological and methodological commitments to the relational (Caine, Estefan, & Clandinin, 2013), as being a site for memory, imagination (Greene, 1995⁶; Sarbin, 2004⁷), and possibility (Greene, 1995; Lindemann Nelson, 1995). As I move towards a forward-looking story of myself as a narrative inquirer, I know that while I must tread cautiously, I must also be willing "to break with the taken-for-granted" (Greene, 1993, p. 211).

Resonances

Several ideas seemed to resonate as we shared some of our experiences related to diversity, in the telling and retelling (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) of our stories. Anzaldua (1987/1999) uses the term *la facultad* to refer to an ability that is developed when habitual modes of seeing reality are broken and new ways of seeing are created. *La facultad* is "anything that breaks into one's everyday mode of perception, that causes a break in one's defenses and resistance, anything that takes one from one's habitual grounding, causes the depth to open up, causes a shift in perception" (p. 61). It is a way of experiencing the self. Inquiring into who we are and are becoming as researchers allows us to be present to the ways we frame our experiences within habitual modes of perception.

We are also drawn to Lindemann Nelson (1995) who speaks of facing oneself as a bridge to valuing difference. In facing ourselves, we occupied spaces of contradictions and tensions, spaces Heilbrun (1999) imagined as liminal. Liminality, for Heilbrun, is experience at the threshold:

The word 'limen' means 'threshold,' and to be in a state of liminality is to be poised upon uncertain ground, to be leaving one condition or country or self and entering

upon another. But the most salient sign of liminality is its unsteadiness, its lack of clarity about exactly where one belongs and what one should be doing, or wants to be doing. (p. 3)

Dwelling within these spaces of liminality, we awakened to the different ways in which we had perhaps storied people and how they may have storied us. Adichie (2009) compels us to consider the dangers to be found in simply attending to single stories, noting, “It is impossible to engage properly with a place or a person without engaging with *all* of the stories of that place and that person.” She stresses that the single story “robs people of dignity. It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult. It emphasizes how we are different rather than how we are similar.”

Moving Forward as Narrative Inquirers

As we inquired into our stories, ever conscious of the fluidity of time, place, and relationships, we were mindful of always being in the midst of a multiplicity of stories—the personal, social, institutional, cultural, linguistic, and familial stories that we all live by and within (Clandinin, 2013). As Muna told and retold her stories she began to understand how living behind what she began to see as a defensive wall could create “structured silences” in her relationships. As she awakened to retelling her stories, she came to see that such silences would not allow her to come alongside participants in the relational methodology of narrative inquiry. As Jean told and retold her stories, she began to allow for the possibility of meeting Truong in ways that allowed both of them to be more than single stories, caught within narrow and structured plotlines. It was only in creating a space between that allowed them both to become, that they could do the work of engaging in relational narrative inquiry. As Jinny told and retold her stories, she began to see that she needed to allow for the multiplicity of stories that we each live and tell, stories that we know are shaped by, and which shape, multiple cultural, social, institutional, and familial stories. Holding close this multiplicity of stories, she imagined narrative inquiry spaces as ways of being attentive to a diversity of lives.

In our “effort[s] to gain perspective on our constructs and our categories” (Greene, 1993, p. 211), in our efforts to face ourselves and break with the taken-for-granted, the ethical necessity of this challenging work was brought to the foreground. With the profound conviction that “there must be a confronting of the contradictions, the instances of savagery, the neglect, and the possibility of care” (p. 220) in our research relationships, we courted and embraced uncertainty, vulnerability, and tension in our

autobiographical tellings and retellings. As we puzzled about how to come alongside diverse participants, what became clear is that, just as there can never be a single story of experience, there can never be a single story of how to open narrative inquiry spaces of belonging. Rather, “there can only be a conversation drawing in voices kept inaudible over the generations, a dialogue involving more and more living persons ... never reaching a final conclusion, always incomplete, but richer and more densely woven” (pp. 212–213) as we work to attend to and honour the complexity of lives lived in different places, in different times, and structured by different landscapes.

Notes

1. Drawing upon Dewey’s (1938) conception of experience as the interplay between continuity and interaction enacted in situations, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) conceived of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space as attending to the interactions of the dimensions of temporality (past, present, and future), sociality (the relationship between the personal and the social), and place (the context by which, or within which, lived experiences are shaped).
2. Research Issues is a weekly cross-cultural, intergenerational, and interdisciplinary gathering place at the University of Alberta for graduate students, teachers, faculty, and visitors to share and inquire into stories of experience.
3. “Stories to live” by is a term used to refer to a narrative conception of identity (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999).
4. Lindemann Nelson (1995) differentiated between *found* communities, those of place, and *chosen* communities, those we voluntarily form and/or choose to join.
5. By bumping up, we draw attention to the tensions that live between an individual’s stories to live by and the stories that others live and tell.
6. Imaginative capacity, observes Greene (1995), “is to see beyond what the imaginer has called normal or “common-sensible” and to carve out new orders in experience” (p. 19).
7. For Sarbin (2004), “The greater the degree of embodied involvement in narrative-inspired imaginings, the more likely that the reader or listener will “feel with” or identify with the protagonist’s efforts to resolve the moral issues central to a particular plot” (p. 17).

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Science Education for Social Justice Using the Knowledge-Building Communities Model

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ABSTRACT

In this article, we explore the connections to, and potential contributions of, the knowledge-building communities (KBC) model to science education for social justice. We examine the principles and design features that underpin the KBC model and reflect on the ways in which they are consistent with, and support some of, the important dimensions of science education for social justice, including: 1) building on students' ideas and interests; 2) encouraging and valuing the inclusion of diverse perspectives; 3) collaborative participation and community; and 4) fostering engagement with the outside world.

Science Education for Social Justice

In broad terms, science education focused on social justice embraces two goals. First, it is concerned with making science education more accessible to all students, especially those belonging to groups traditionally marginalized from science education (e.g., females, Aboriginals). Second, it aims to equip student with the knowledge, skills and, most importantly, a commitment to taking action to create a more socially just and environmentally sound world (Barton, 2003; Bencze & Alsop, 2009; Hodson, 1998, 2003). Science education for social justice is informed by the progressive education movement (Hein, 2012), most notably associated with the writings of John Dewey. The progressive educational approach that Dewey developed requires, in addition to adopting his active child-centered pedagogy, that one embrace a socio-political agenda as the moral aim of education (Hein, 2012). Subsequently, in

the hands of a series of scientist/educators, active ways of engaging children in science have been explored by people including David Hawkins at the Hawkins Centers for Learning (Hawkins, 1974), Frank Oppenheimer at the Exploratorium (Cole, 2009), and Jerrod Zacharias at the Education Development Center (Goldstein, 1992). In all of these cases a connection was made between the importance of practicing a pedagogy that increased students' science knowledge and promoting active student participation in the service of democracy and social justice. In Zacharias' case it has been said,

His faith in the power of science to improve society, not through its technical accomplishments but through the potential of science education to help people think clearly and make informed judgments, matches Dewey's repeated emphasis on the need for education that promotes thinking and inquiry in support of social goals of a democratic society. (Hein, 2012, p. 172)

Knowledge-Building Communities (KBC) Model

The knowledge-building communities (KBC) model is an educational approach that promotes democratic ideals by requiring all participants to engage as a community in the production of knowledge that is continually improved for the benefit of the community (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 2003; Scardamalia, 2002). There are 12 principles that underpin the KBC model, and in point form, include: 1) real ideas, authentic problems; 2) improvable ideas; 3) idea diversity; 4) rise above; 5) epistemic agency; 6) community knowledge; collective responsibility; 7) democratizing knowledge; 8) symmetric knowledge advancement; 9) pervasive knowledge building; 10) constructive use of authoritative sources; 11) knowledge-building discourse; and 12) embedded and transformative assessment. For a thorough presentation of these principles, please see Scardamalia, 2002; and Scardamalia and Bereiter, 2006.

In contrast to other constructivist pedagogies (e.g., project-based learning), the KBC model requires that students set personal and group goals, acquire and critique resources, monitor ongoing growth, and modify their strategies in light of the progress they are making both individually and as a group (Hmelo-Silver & Barrow, 2008). Students are encouraged to identify problems of interest, conduct research on these problems, and engage in community discourse with awareness that collective understanding, rather than individual learning and performance, is the goal (Caswell & Bielaczyc, 2001).

The KBC model involves the use of the Knowledge Forum® (KF) software environment to facilitate student sharing of questions, theories, and information (Scardamalia

& Bereiter, 1996, 2003, 2006). As a collaborative computer environment involving a communal database, KF provides support for community knowledge building that allows individuals to read, reflect on, and respond to their own ideas and the ideas of others. The database contains tools that allow students to further build upon other students' ideas, raise issues for further exploration and, where appropriate, rise above these ideas by subsuming them into a new note structure. As such, KF provides an online environment for groups to carry on collaborative knowledge work among themselves and with others outside of their local community.

Organization of Article

Our review of the KBC model will focus on the relationship among the KBC principles, common design features and the manner in which the model supports elementary science education for social justice. Below we reflect on the ways in which the KBC principles and design features are consistent with and support the following dimensions of science education for social justice: 1) building on students' ideas and interests; 2) encouraging and valuing the inclusion of diverse perspectives; 3) collaborative participation and community; and 4) fostering engagement with the outside world. After reviewing the social justice connections to the KBC model, we illustrate these points by briefly presenting two contrasting classroom implementations of the KBC model. The first example is taken from the grade 5/6 teaching experiences of the first author and illustrates both the common design features of a KBC classroom and the inclusive and expansive nature of a KBC approach to science education. The second example is from a different grade 5/6 class (with whom the authors conducted research) that was part of an international network focused on advancing student understanding of climate change.

Building on Students' Ideas and Interests

Traditionally, science education is based on predetermined learning objectives that may have little or nothing to do with students' interests or concerns. As such, science education is often perceived by students as being overly abstract and irrelevant to their lives (Hodson, 1998). This is particularly the case for students belonging to groups that have historically been marginalized from science education (e.g., females, Aborigines). Often, science concepts are extracted from official curriculum documents and presented in contexts that are foreign to these students (Aikenhead, 2006), resulting in students distancing themselves from science, or at best, engaging superficially with science lessons. As Roth and Barton (2004) note:

...Students from all different kinds of backgrounds arrive at school class and are subject to a homogeneous body of knowledge upon which they are tested at the culmination of the school year. Science is defined not by how one manages, alone or collectively, to use or produce science by way of this knowledge at home or at school, in response to a need or concern or practically toward their own or their community's future. Rather, success takes the form of a predetermined response to a cooked-up problem, an abstract set of ideals... (p. 8)

Central importance of student ideas (real ideas, authentic problems). “Knowledge problems arise from efforts to understand the world. Ideas produced or appropriated are as real as things touched and felt. Problems are ones that learners really care about—usually very different from textbook problems and puzzles” (Scardamalia, 2002, p. 76). This KBC principle recognizes students’ ideas and problems of understanding as the starting points for student knowledge building. This principle supports the development of science curricula that build on students’ funds of knowledge (Moll, 1992) and is personally and culturally relevant to students. This is consistent with culturally responsive curriculum that emphasizes the need to take into account the knowledge, beliefs, values, aspirations, and personal experiences of individual students (Hodson, 1998).

All student ideas are improvable (improvable Ideas). In the KBC model, students are encouraged to actively engage in what they are doing and to view all ideas as improvable. “All ideas are treated as improvable. Participants work continuously to improve the quality, coherence, and utility of ideas. For such work to prosper, the culture must be one of psychological safety, so that people feel safe in taking risks” (Scardamalia, 2002, p. 76). The progressive improvement of society is modeled in the way ideas are raised, discussed, and moved forward by a KBC.

Students have agency over their ideas and, in turn, the direction of the curriculum (epistemic agency). Empirical research using the KBC model has demonstrated that students as young as kindergarten can exercise control over their ideas when given the opportunity (Tarchi et al., 2012). The KBC model encourages students to take an active role in designing their learning experiences by centering discussion on their ideas and concerns. Students develop the skills and dispositions necessary to “take over high-level knowledge work (generating ideas and plans, evaluating results, etc...) usually reserved for teachers” (Scardamalia, 2002, p. 77). The KBC model teaches students to become self-directed learners who can take initiative. Contributing to a socially and environmentally just society requires individuals who can take initiative, create plans for taking action on important social/scientific issues, monitor their progress,

and evaluate their efforts. Becoming agents of social change requires active rather than passive citizens.

Encouraging and Valuing the Inclusion of Diverse Perspectives

Often the goal in science classrooms is for students to learn the correct theory or scientific concept. A deliberate effort to introduce diverse perspectives is often lacking and the potential and importance of understanding and comparing diverse perspectives is overlooked. The following three principles of the KBC model promote the goal of encouraging and valuing the inclusion of diverse perspectives: Idea Diversity, Democratizing Knowledge, and Constructive Uses of Authoritative Sources.

Respecting the diversity of student ideas (idea diversity). Underpinning this principle is an authentic (rather than token) recognition of the importance of diverse ideas or perspectives. As noted by Scardamalia (2002), “To understand an idea is to understand the ideas that surround it, including those that stand in contrast to it. Idea diversity creates a rich environment for ideas to evolve into new and more refined forms” (p. 76). This principle is consistent with multicultural education frameworks that emphasize the importance of helping students appreciate and respect multiple perspectives and providing a safe space for students to express their diverse ideas and worldviews (e.g., Banks, 1996).

All members of the community have a democratic right to participate (democratizing knowledge). This principle states that,

All participants are considered legitimate contributors to the shared goals of the community. All take pride in the knowledge advances achieved by the group. The group’s diversity and divisions do not translate into hierarchies of “knowledge haves and have-nots” or “innovators and non-innovators.” (Scardamalia, 2002, p. 78)

This principle emphasizes that all students, not just those typically recognized as academically strong, are empowered to contribute to and feel pride in progress made to the goals of the classroom community. The focus of this principle on the collective/group rather than the individual is consistent with culturally responsive pedagogy (Nieto, 2010).

Students take a critical stance on resources (constructive uses of authoritative sources). “To know a discipline is to be in touch with the present state and growing edge of knowledge in the field. This requires respect and understanding of authoritative sources, combined with a critical stance toward them” (Scardamalia, 2002, p. 78).

This principle highlights the importance of students learning to constructively critique the sources they consult to support their knowledge-building efforts. This is important, from a science education for social justice perspective, because science resources are imperfect. Sometimes, for example, science resources can misrepresent the nature of science and convey an image of science as a set of absolute facts. Helping students to constructively use authoritative sources also contributes to the diversity of ideas that are introduced into the KBC classroom.

Collaborative Participation and Community

Although collaboration is recognized as being an important skill that students in science education should develop, rarely is it integrated deeply into the culture and fabric of a classroom. Collaborative participation and a strong sense of community are important features of an inclusive classroom (Nieto, 2010). There are several principles underpinning the KBC model that promote collaborative participation and community: Community Knowledge, Collective Responsibility, Embedded and Transformative Assessment, Rise Above, and Knowledge-Building Discourse.

Responsibility to participate (community knowledge, collective responsibility).

This KBC principle emphasizes collective responsibility for the generation of knowledge that is of value to the local and broader community (Scardamalia, 2002).

Contributions to shared, top-level goals of the organization are prized and rewarded as much as individual achievements. Beyond the right to participation in a knowledge building community, individual members have a responsibility to participate in ways that advance community knowledge. As a community, any effort to build knowledge or take action needs to be for the benefit of the community. Team members produce ideas of value to others and share responsibility for the overall advancement of knowledge in the community. (p. 77)

Many cultures value collaboration and find it more productive to learn in a collaborative community. Thus, an emphasis on the community rather than individual is consistent with culturally relevant pedagogy (Nieto, 2010).

Ongoing assessment supports progress (embedded and transformative assessment). “Assessment is part of the effort to advance knowledge—it is used to identify problems as the work proceeds and is embedded in the day-to-day workings of the organization. The community engages in its own internal assessment” (Scardamalia, 2002, p. 79). The KF software environment provides the means for ongoing simultaneous

embedded assessment by virtue of all members being able to communicate about each other's ideas, and in that moment provide reflection on the meaning and importance to themselves and to the community.

Rise above leads to progress (rise above).

Working toward more inclusive principles and higher-level formulations of problems. It means learning to work with diversity, complexity and messiness, and out of that achieve new syntheses. By moving to higher planes of understanding, knowledge-builders transcend trivialities and oversimplifications and move beyond current best practices. (p. 77)

Although this KBC principle is cast in terms of movement to "higher planes of understanding" the underlying operative concern is for the questions, "Are we getting somewhere significant to us?" and "If so, where is that taking us and how do we define it?" Both of these questions are reflective and assessment-oriented. They lead the group that undertakes the creation of a rise-above note in the KF environment to engage in significant reflection about the state of their current and past knowledge work, and to set new goals for moving forward with their knowledge building.

Students engage in progressive inclusive dialogue (knowledge-building discourse). Knowledge-building discourse is progressive inclusive dialogue that allows all students to have a voice into the conversation. That the Knowledge Forum software environment affords the classroom an online space to discuss the knowledge being developed is understood. Yet, there is also a need that develops in each class that requires the development of a way to talk about the knowledge building off of the computers. Face-to-face discourse that mirrors the transformative discourse supported by the KF environment is essential. Overall,

The discourse of Knowledge Building Communities results in more than the sharing of knowledge; the knowledge itself is refined and transformed through the discursive practices of the community (through) practices that have the advancement of knowledge as their explicit goal. (p. 78)

Classroom discourse in a KBC, both in the collaborative online environment and in face-to-face conversation, is oriented toward open acceptance of and working with the ideas of others. Discourse is rendered more as dialogue between collaborators interested in the development of knowledge of value to the local community. Critiques of the ideas are welcome as they lead to improvements and benefit the overall

well-being of the community. From a social justice point of view, students need to be able to learn how to “critique” not only their own, but also other people’s ideas. Most importantly, students need to learn to recognize the fact that multiple perspectives on issues/questions/problems exist and then learn how to successfully work with these multiple perspectives. What we want is for students to eventually learn how to engage in this evaluation of perspectives and learn that the degree to which an idea/theory/perspective is productive is dependent on the context. As noted by Hodson (1998), it is important to help students develop the

second order understanding that includes: a) recognizing that alternative conceptions and explanations exist (and alternative methods too); b) appreciating that the appropriateness and usefulness of knowledge are determined by context; c) knowing what knowledge to access and how to use it in a variety of problem situations and social contexts. (p. 127)

Fostering Engagement With the Outside World

Socio-political concerns associated with social justice education are broad and expansive, encompassing a general concern for the promotion of democracy and the improvement of life in general for all those involved, but mostly for those least well-off (Hein, 2012). Dewey (1916) defines society as “one by its very nature. The qualities which accompany this unity, praiseworthy community of purpose and welfare, loyalty to public ends, mutuality of sympathy, are emphasized” (p. 82). Education for social justice requires connections be made to the general concerns of society beyond the classroom walls. A current example of this approach to activist education is the STEPWISE program (Bencze & Alsop, 2009).

STEPWISE orients most learning outcomes in science and technology education towards ‘WISE Activism,’ which is/are action(s) people might take to overcome problems for the ‘well-being of individuals, societies and environments’ (WISE) associated with fields of science and technology and their products and services. (p. 72)

The degree to which science education for social justice is instantiated through the use of the KBC model varies depending on the degree to which the following KBC principles are implemented with connection to, and interaction with, the outside world: Real Ideas, Authentic Problems, Pervasive Knowledge Building and Symmetric Knowledge Advancement.

Authentic problem in the world at large (real ideas, authentic problems). Although we highlighted this principle as important in the section *building on students' ideas and interests*, it is also relevant in the context of connecting students to authentic societal issues outside the classroom walls. When classroom communities take on societal problems as the focus of their knowledge-building work, they transform their efforts from being of benefit to their local community to potentially being of relevance to the broader world.

Knowledge work that matters pervades one's life (pervasive knowledge building). This principle encourages students to view all problems and questions, both "in and out of school, as occasions for building knowledge" (Scardamalia, 2002, p. 78). Thus, all students' questions and interests outside of school are validated and recognized as being worthy of study. This blurs the boundaries between school and other areas of students' lives, and encourages them to recognize science as being applicable and relevant to all aspects of their lives (Kozoll & Osborne, 2004).

Knowledge work extends beyond the walls of the school to connect to the real world (symmetric knowledge advancement). "Expertise is distributed within and between communities. Symmetry in knowledge advancement results from knowledge exchange and from the fact that to give knowledge is to get knowledge" (Scardamalia, 2002, p. 78). Considered in combination with the other two principles related to *fostering engagement with the outside world*, this principle suggests that a KBC should function in a transactional manner with the world outside of the classroom, with both benefiting from the relationship.

Example I: Knowledge Building About Earth, Air, and Outer Space

The following example illustrates the manner in which the KBC model focuses a community on creating collaborative knowledge. This example is of 20 grade 5/6 students in a laboratory school setting and their efforts to build knowledge about earth, air, and outer space. This example is a recounting of a year of knowledge building while the lead author was a classroom teacher. Ahead of the start of the school year the grade 6 topics of Flight and Outer Space were identified as the potential focus of study for the incoming class of students. However, this choice was not revealed to the students and no attempt was made to prepare the classroom for the anticipated knowledge building. On the first day of school the students entered a room that was devoid of any evidence of a preconceived idea about what they were going to be studying that year. The first assignment was for the students to go home and return to class with "something that they didn't get about the world." Students were encouraged

to bring in newspaper clippings, magazine articles, or just their own thoughts. A bulletin board was set up to display the perplexing topics and the group engaged in discussion that ensured contributions by all members of the group could be heard and responded to by all members of the class (see Crosstalk in Brown & Campione, 1996). This cycle of bringing in topics and discussing them was repeated over a three-week period, with common themes being identified and some problems of understanding being settled through discussion and research. At the end of this period of time, the class had identified a set of knowledge problems that were to encompass and launch their substantive knowledge-building work. These topics were physically posted under what became known as the “curriculum umbrella” to signify that they had something in common and were problems that the community had agreed were worthy of study. Beyond the curriculum-based topics of Flight, Earth, Weather, and Outer Space the following expansive set of problems of understanding were identified and worked on during the school year (see Figure 1).

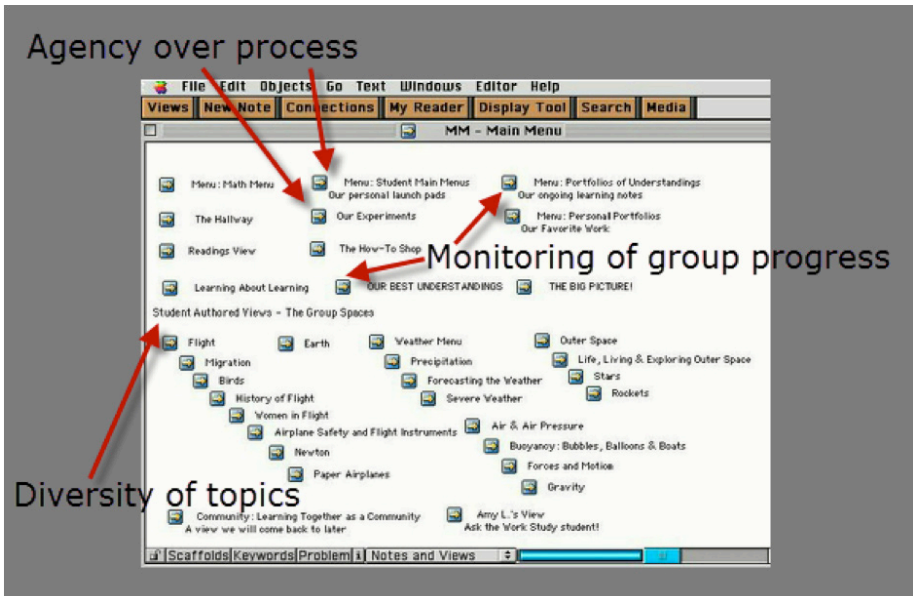


Fig. 1: Annotated screen capture of Main View of Knowledge Forum database displaying the full array of topics and work spaces available to the students. Group and individual portfolios were used to monitor developments in the knowledge work. Student-generated science experiments were entered in the “Our Experiments” view.

To support the work of this community several common design features were utilized, including the following.

Reciprocal reading: Taking a critical stance on resources. An adapted form of Reciprocal Teaching (RT) (Brown & Campione, 1996) was used to assist students in addressing resource material that was written above a grade 5/6 level. This was necessary to provide students with reasonable access to the content of these resources, and more generally to the material that was associated with the problems they were addressing. Where RT stresses the use of roles to promote comprehension strategies, the approach that was taken in this classroom was more generally a group process focused on determining the resources' relevance and support for the research question.

Crosstalks/KB talks. A discussion format called Crosstalk (Brown & Campione, 1996) or KB Talk used off of the computers to support the knowledge-building discourse. This design feature connects all members together in dialogue around a single knowledge-based concern. In the version of Crosstalk that developed in this classroom, there was a set of rules and processes that included: students sat in a circle along with the teacher; the teacher being treated as an equal member of the group and needing to raise his hand to speak; no one raising his or her hand to speak until the previous person had finished speaking; and the talk being based not on a topic but instead on a problem of understanding or knowledge advance furnished by one of the members of the class. The class held these sessions once a week for roughly 30 minutes, as there was always a problem of understanding or knowledge advance to share, discuss, and advance.

Portfolios as a means of embedding individual and group assessment. Portfolios were used within the database to monitor the growth of knowledge for each student as well as for the class as a whole. These "portfolios of understanding" (see Figure 1) were not static but evolved through the school year as a reflection of the students' knowledge work. Although the goal of a KBC is community knowledge development and embedded assessment, it was important to have individual students monitor and critique their own knowledge progress. As a result of writing their "portfolio notes," students would identify gaps and next steps that they viewed as critical to their forward progress and, in turn, the progress of the community.

Public sharing of knowledge work. A parents' night was held to celebrate and share the knowledge work that have been done by the class during the school year. This act of sharing constituted a limited form of action and outreach in the world outside of the classroom. The views in the KF database, along with other physical artifacts of their knowledge building (e.g., wind tunnel), were presented to the parents. This night was a culmination of their work; however, throughout the school year the parents had also been encouraged to come in before class to sit and have their child guide them through their child's portfolio notes and any relevant KF views.

Social justice in example I. Students had agency over both the content and *the processes by which knowledge was created* in this knowledge-building community. Topics not initially considered by the teacher (e.g., Women in Flight; Buoyancy & Bubbles) were brought in under the “curriculum umbrella” by the students, such that they were treated as important areas of knowledge development that would be of benefit to the community. Students accessed sophisticated resources (e.g., a university gravity text) and interacted directly with individuals in the outside world (e.g., e-mailing a professor) to gain information to support their knowledge-building efforts. The KBC that developed utilized several design features that assisted in bringing all students into the work, including the generative use of the KF environment, weekly Crosstalks, regular reading groups, and the use of reflective portfolios to assess the progress of individuals and the group. In terms of the main goals of science education for social justice, the level and nature of participation by members of this KBC made it possible for all students to become legitimate contributors to the social situation. This example illustrates the first goal of science education for social justice—ensuring that science education is accessible for *all* students. The next example follows a similar trajectory in terms of implementing the common design features, but more directly addresses the second goal of science education for social justice—facilitating student commitment to taking action to create a more socially just and environmentally sound world.

KBC Example II: Knowledge Building International Project

This KBC example involves a class of 18 grade 5/6 students at a private school in a Canadian city as they participated in the Knowledge Building International Project (KBIP). The KBIP was a network of schools engaged in building knowledge about climate change (Laferrière, 2008). Since all of the design features outlined in the first example were also used in this classroom, we will not outline these here. After a brief description of the project, we focus our discussion on the classroom processes related to science education for social justice.

As is generally the case with the study of climate change in schools (Svihla & Linn, 2012), the *causes* of climate change were initially the central concern for this KBC (e.g., greenhouse effect with a focus on energy transformation). These questions were taken up through engaging in reading groups, and interacting on Knowledge Forum and in Crosstalk meetings. There was also a clear focus on the global *consequences* of climate change. These global effects were generally brought into the KBC discourse by the teacher through films (e.g., *An Inconvenient Truth*; *Six Degrees*) and also through books on the topic (e.g., *This Is My Planet: The Kids' Guide to Global Warming*).

The consequences of climate change, such as deforestation and the severity of natural disasters, were topics of inquiry that were of significant concern to the students.

In this KBC, connections to the outside world were clearly enhanced because of the focus on the socio-scientific issue of global warming/climate change. In addition, as the knowledge building progressed, various levels of environmental *actions* were engaged in by the students, including: 1) personal; 2) family; 3) community/societal (Sharkawy & Reeve, forthcoming). Personal initiatives were identified as instances when students used their learning to effect change in their personal lives (e.g., changes in products they purchased; personal energy consumption; dietary changes). Family initiatives described how students used their learning to effect change in the lives of significant others in their family. Examples included: engaging parents in discussions on environmental issues (e.g., environmentally friendly cars to purchase for the family); encouraging family to reduce electrical consumption; and cutting down on consumption of products they considered unhealthy for the environment (e.g., bottled water; meat). Community/societal initiatives were identified as socio-political actions, such as students writing to members of government to promote changes in an environmental policy/practice.

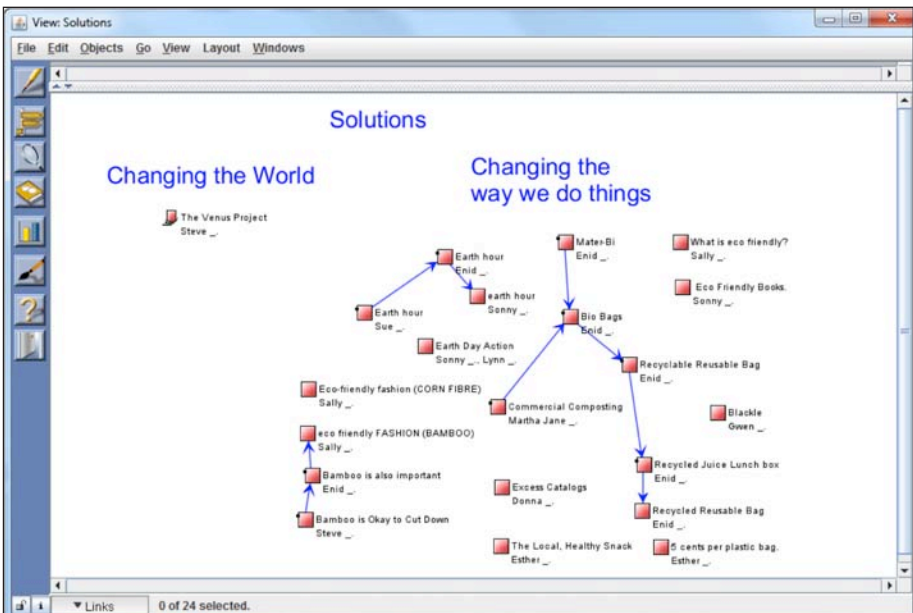


Fig. 2: Screen capture of the Solutions view in Knowledge Forum database for Example II. Screen capture taken at end of first term of the study. Student focus is on the changes/actions that can be taken by the group.

Early in the process students were made aware that they were part of an international network and that their knowledge work would eventually be made available to the broader Knowledge Building International Project. A presentation was subsequently made via a videoconferencing system at the end of the knowledge building. Students also shared their knowledge advances with each other and presented their knowledge to other classes in their school (e.g., local community).

Social justice in example II. Overall, the activities undertaken by this KBC seem to have helped foster student engagement with the outside world as students developed knowledge that was not only of value to the local community, but also to the broader set of communities participating in the KBIP. Students were also engaged with the outside world through their interaction with an authentic problem, constructive uses of authoritative sources, the pervasiveness of the knowledge building in their lives, and their contact with other knowledge-building communities around the world. Above all this example demonstrates how students in a KBC can begin to commit to taking action to create a more socially just and environmentally sound world.

Concluding Remarks

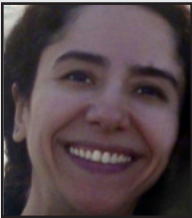
The knowledge-building community model—its principles, unique technology, and classroom processes—provide valuable resources that support the goals of science education for social justice. It promotes the legitimate participation of all members of a community by building on students' cultural resources, interests, and concerns. The KBC model invites and promotes the inclusion of a diversity of voices, viewing this as essential to both knowledge growth and also the development of a democratic and socially just society. The KBC model also emphasizes a collaborative community, and progressive inclusive dialogue as the underlying contour of all interactions between its members. As a result, the KBC model provides an excellent foundation for making science education accessible for all students, among the many important goals of science education for social justice. What the KBC model does not explicitly and deliberately advocate is encouragement for students to take action on socio-political and environmental issues. However, despite the KBC model's lack of emphasis on this, teachers can choose to incorporate an action component into their teaching. Those that do so, as was the case in the second example, will be taking the KBC into a fuller rendering of what science education for social justice can begin to achieve in schools.

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Unbundling Stories: Encountering Tensions Between the Familial and School Curriculum-Making Worlds

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an autobiographical narrative inquiry into lived experiences in home and school places. Drawing on Huber, Murphy, and Clandinin's (2011) reconceptualization of curriculum making as occurring in two worlds (Lugones, 1987), the author explores the tensions that existed between her early familial curriculum-making world and her school curriculum-making worlds. Inquiring into the embodied tensions she carries, the author recognizes how she privileges school curriculum making over familial curriculum making in schools, and wonders of the costs to the children she teaches, as well to herself in doing so.

Attending to Stories Through Narrative Inquiry

I first came to learn about the importance of understanding experience as narrative life composition through telling stories of experience as a way to explore my personal practical knowledge.¹ It occurred in a graduate course titled, *Life in Elementary Classrooms*, offered by Dr. D. Jean Clandinin. It was in this course where I began to learn of narrative inquiry as both a way of understanding experience and as a research methodology. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) developed the following definition of narrative inquiry,

People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the

world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience (p. 479).

Narrative inquiry recognizes and honors the complexities of human experiences and the contexts, which are shaped through the past, present, and future via the stories we live and tell. As I shared stories of earlier experiences in various contexts alongside others, I began to illuminate my earlier stories of school and its importance in my familial world, together with experiences I had with my late granny, Mary Pruden. While I began to tell and retell stories of who I was and who I was becoming, both professionally and personally, resonances of place and belonging began to emerge. Other wonderings around identity also began to surface, specifically around my experiences of becoming a teacher, and how this was shaped by my experiences in school and at home. I found myself writing more stories about the life of my granny, and of my experiences by her side, remembering our shared familial stories. I also began to search for physical, tangible items such as early writing pieces,² photographs, and recorded conversations that brought me closer to those particular experiences.

It was also in this course I began to learn from stories, revisiting stories once told, and lived, narratively inquiring into the bumping places where tensions existed. As I began to think about important stories, I returned to my familial world where I began to form my identity, or my stories to live by.³ As I began to narratively inquire into my stories of experiences, I was able to see possibilities in retelling stories. Clandinin and Connelly (1998) write about the importance of inquiring into, or retelling of, stories as a way to move forward because,

the promise of storytelling emerges when we move beyond regarding a story as a fixed entity and engage in conversation with our stories. The mere telling of a story leaves it as a fixed entity. It is in the inquiry, our conversations with each other, with texts, with situations, and with other stories that we can come to retelling our stories and to reliving them. (p. 251)

At one time, I believed stories to be fixed, frozen in time and place, stories told of my family and I, stories I told of my family and self and who we are in the world, as these became stories to live by. However, in the course, I participated in a weekly works-in-progress group where I worked in a group with two peers to share stories of experience and to respond in ways that allowed each of us to see other possibilities in future retellings (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As I listened, and responded, to others' stories of experience I was encouraged to remain attentive to the three-dimensional

narrative inquiry space of temporality, sociality, and place.⁴ It was in this safe place, in the works-in-progress groups where relationships developed over time, where I began to tell and listen to the secret and cover stories⁵ that were both on and off our professional landscapes.

Attending to Familial Curriculum Making

In another graduate course called *Building a Curriculum of Community*, offered by Drs. Janice Huber and Shaun Murphy, I began to share more stories of earlier experiences alongside my granny and was introduced to the concept of familial curriculum making. Huber et al. (2011) recognize children live in, across, and between two curriculum-making worlds⁶: the familial curriculum-making world and the school curriculum-making world, which they travel between daily. Huber and colleagues (2011) conceptualized curriculum making to include familial curriculum making as occurring in home and community landscapes as they engaged in narrative inquiries alongside three children and their families. Focusing on Dewey's (1938) notion of experience, Schwab's (1969) four curriculum commonplaces—teacher, learner, subject matter, and milieu—and stories to live by, they began to imagine a counter narrative or counter story that began with the lives of children and families in which they saw curriculum making as a dynamic interaction occurring in multiple landscapes. Huber et al. (2011) define familial curriculum-making as,

an account of parents'/families' and children's lives together in homes and communities where the parents and families are an integral part of the curricular process in which families, children/learners, subject matter, and home and community milieu are in dynamic interaction. (pp. 7–8).

Inquiring into these growing understandings of my experiences with my granny in our familial curriculum-making world, my research puzzle began to take shape. In this paper, I make visible and explore how my experiences in my familial curriculum-making world alongside my granny intercept and bump up against my experiences in the school curriculum-making world, and inquire into how these bumps shaped, and continue to shape, tensions in my stories to live by as teacher. By focusing on the tensions I experienced as I lived in both worlds, I attend to the costs of silencing my familial curriculum making as I privileged school curriculum making. The stories of the past, as retold in the present, carry the resonances of both dominant and Cree/Métis linguistic, social, cultural, institutional, and familial narratives. Through the retelling of experiences I continued to experience more bumping places, or tensions in my stories to live by, alongside my granny. It was in retelling my familial stories of school that

I awakened (Greene, 1995) to the tensions I was living in by choosing school curriculum making over my familial curriculum-making world. I began to wonder what my granny and I had to give up, particularly the *cost* to our lives, as I became more educated. Thoreau (1854/2008) helps me to frame the use of the term “cost” when he wrote, “the cost of a thing is the amount of what I will call life which is required to be exchanged for it” (p. 20). Clandinin and colleagues (2012) also wonder about the cost of becoming a teacher when they write, “The cost of becoming a teacher is paid from the ‘life’ of the teacher, much of which takes place off the school landscape” (p. 72). It is in this sense I use the term *cost*. I began to frame my research puzzle and wonder about the cost to my life and familial curriculum-making world as I privileged the school curriculum-making world, as a student and teacher. For this autobiographical narrative inquiry, my research puzzle is an exploration of the bumping places between my family stories and the stories that I lived in schools, alongside my granny.

A beginning.

I will tell you something about stories,

[He said]

They aren't just entertainment,

Don't be fooled.

They are all we have, you see,

all we have to fight off

illness and death.

You don't have anything

if you don't have the stories.

...

He rubbed his belly.

I keep them here

[he said]

Here, put your hand on it

See, it is moving.

There is life here

for the people.

And in the belly of this story

the rituals and the ceremony

are still growing.

(Silko, 1997, p. 2)

Laguna storyteller Leslie Silko (1997) helps me to understand narrative inquiry as she speaks about the importance of attending to stories, reminding me that stories carry me through life, moving and growing “in the belly,” shaping my experiences and the stories I live and tell. When I think of the stories I tell, I also pay attention to the stories I don’t tell, the silent stories, and I wonder how these stories shape me, as I move forward. When she writes of *the rituals and the ceremony*, I am reminded of how the stories I carry are sacred stories, from places I came to know first and how, over time, the stories I carry shaped, and continue to shape, who I am and who I am becoming. Crites (1971) refers to sacred stories as unspoken resonances living in stories of the past, while presently creating a forward-looking story, when he writes,

and certainly the sacred story to which we give this name cannot be directly told but its resonances can be felt in many of the stories that are being told, in songs being sung, in a renewed resolution to act. (p. 311)

I imagine sacred stories reverberating through generations, carrying on, moving and growing through stories, spoken and unspoken. The resonances of the stories I tell of my experiences are filled with experiences from my familial curriculum-making world with my granny. I have returned to the stories of my granny, stories of the person who has shaped me the most, stories from a place of love, stories I remember were told to me, by her. I return to the stories she believed were important to her. As I carry these familial, intergenerational stories in my body, they are helping me change and grow, as I move forward in a “renewed resolution to act” (Crites, 1971) and begin to wonder about the importance of awakening to stories of experience from the familial curriculum-making world as I lived in the school curriculum-making world.

Encountering Tensions

King (2003) reminds me to be mindful “that stories were medicine, that a story told one way could cure, that the same story told another way could injure” (p. 92). I hope in the retelling of my stories that I remember of my experiences with my granny, I do not injure anyone in the process, including myself. As I return to my experiences in my familial curriculum-making world, I am filled with many ethical dilemmas around writing my early stories. I feel tensions alongside family members who will read my work and the relational ethics I hold alongside them and my late granny; therefore it is important to mention the wonderings I carry are mine alone. I can only share my inquiries alongside my experiences through the stories told or given to me, by my granny. I hope I remain attentive to the stories of my granny with respect and integrity to our experiences. I also worry about how readers will interpret the storied experiences

I write about. I know these stories come from a place of love for my home place, my first place of knowing and living. I also know I cannot tell the whole story of my experiences with my granny, but rather only a few small fragments. As I lay fragments of my stories alongside fragments of her stories, I am able to wonder and inquire into what becomes visible to me.

Story Bundles⁷

With a focus on narratively inquiring into stories from my familial curriculum-making world in a good way, I was drawn to Anderson's (2011) metaphorical image of a "story bundle." She reminds me of how sacred and relational our stories are. I imagine these bundles as relational, layered, living, dynamic, changing stories residing within each person. I imagine we embody story bundles and, within each bundle, there are individual stories as well as stories from multiple sources. We carry them whether we wish to carry them or not, spoken or unspoken. Story bundles may also present themselves generationally and are part of our knowing through our earliest familial curriculum-making world. The notion of wrapping and unwrapping of story bundles occurs simultaneously, knowingly or unknowingly, creating "stories to live by" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 4). Okri (1997) reminds me of the transformative importance in opening the stories we live by, and in, when he writes:

we live by stories, we also live in them. One way or another we are living the stories planted in us early or along the way, or we are also living the stories we planted - knowingly or unknowingly - in ourselves. We live stories that either give our lives meaning or negate it with meaninglessness. If we change the stories we live by, quite possibly we change our lives. (p. 46)

It is to my familial, intergenerational stories, those planted in me, knowingly or unknowingly, that I attend. I inquire into the gaps, silences, and bumping places where there were lived tensions alongside my granny as I developed my forward-looking stories. I wish to expand my own story bundles, as I create new stories to live by. Neumann (1997) reminds me to pay attention to the silences in stories of human lives and the difficulties of separating the intertwining of relational and generational stories, alongside our own stories. These lived stories weave backwards and forward, inward and outward and cannot be isolated and separated from my familial world, the places I have come to know, and live, first. Setterfield (2006) allows me to see the parts and the whole, simultaneously, when she writes,

Human lives are not pieces of string that can be separated out from a knot of others and laid out straight. Families are webs. Impossible to touch one part of it without setting the rest vibrating. Impossible to understand one part without having a sense of the whole. (p. 59)

The stories I write about are stories woven throughout my being, mind, body, and spirit. As I attend to my experiences in the familial curriculum-making world, which granny and I co-composed (Huber et al., 2011), I am reminded of Greene's (1993) words, "the narratives we shape out of materials of our lived lives must somehow take account of our original landscapes" (p. 148). They are living stories; organic stories continuously being reshaped, as long as I continue to inquire into them. In inquiring into my lived and told stories, I looked back to remember and to wonder why these experiences with my granny and schools "sit in my belly" more profoundly than others. I wonder why I pay more attention to these stories than to others. It is through my autobiographical narrative inquiry into the stories lived alongside my granny, that I hope I will be able to learn more from them and to create shifted stories to live by.

Story Bundle 1: Sliding Back to an Early Forward-Looking Story

When I returned to my home place⁸ through the telling of my earlier experiences, I began to share sacred familial stories, unwrapping and reshaping my story bundles as granddaughter, student, and teacher, in both my familial and school curriculum-making worlds.

Looking back: An early story to live by.

*My girl,
Go to school. Don't be like me.
Gee, I wish my mom let me go to school.
Once you have kids, that's it, your life is over!
Always go to school and become somebody first.
Okay!*

(Recalled Memory, Interim Research Text, 2011)

When I was a young child, teenager, and young adult attending University, my granny often repeated this statement to me while we were alone in her bedroom. Alongside her advice, my granny often spoke of a shift in her stories to live by when she was in year three, a story that not only shaped her life, but mine as well. Her story

would slide backwards in time to a place when her mother, Nancy Gairdner (nee Gladu) took her out of St. Bernard's Indian Residential School⁹ during her third year. At first she mentioned it was because her tongue was swollen, implying this physical ailment was the main reason her mother would not let her return. Her demeanor and story shifted as she began sharing her secret story of having to stay home; she was expected to raise her younger siblings and take care of the house while her mother left for days to tend to her trap line. I remember watching her bang her clasped hand on her bed at this memory, expressing regret and anger as she imagined her life would have been much different, if only she had gone to school. Sitting next to her, I remember as a child I did not disagree with her; instead, I was empathetic to her stories of regret and sadness for not being allowed to go to school. I became more convinced of the importance of school. I also remember assuring her I would complete school and become *somebody*. She seemed satisfied in knowing I would not follow in her footsteps, even though I admired and loved who she was and who she had become. As I now slide backwards, remembering my experiences where she expressed the importance of what happened in the school curriculum-making world and becoming *somebody* first, I wonder about the stories of school I was living. Were my experiences in the school curriculum-making world seen as more important than our familial curriculum-making world?

Handwritten notes. I remember sitting with her at her kitchen table, watching her write on pieces of scrap paper. This was her way of documenting her experiences and she often spoke about having a "book" written about her life. She spoke out loud as she slowly and carefully connected letters together, handwriting her thoughts into words and sentences. As I sat and watched her write stories, I was reminded of how others related stories to me of how she taught herself how to read and write beyond grade three. Her handwriting was sometimes difficult to read and filled with scratched out, misspelled words or words written over other words, as she corrected her spelling. She would often ask me how to spell a word or if what she was writing was spelled correctly. Many times I helped her spell words she did not know, but I also remember other times telling her the words she wrote were correct, even though they were not. Looking back, perhaps I did this because I saw her frustration when she had trouble spelling certain words, crumpling and throwing away the paper or flipping it over to start again. She was determined to write her words and sentences correctly. During this time in 1999, she handed me a small pile of handwritten papers that included stories of her life and of school. One particular note stands out from the others. It read, "not going to school made me dumb. I always blame school or my mom I guess because if I had any school [I] am for sure I never ever think Grouard [as] home. This life, very ugly poor life." (Handwritten note, Mary Pruden, 1999). Now 15 years later, as I inquire into her handwritten notes I am filled with wonder and regret. I wonder what I was

thinking about when I received these notes, and why had I put them away for so long? Was I ashamed of what she was writing? Did I withhold her stories from others because I knew in some way she truly believed she had a poor life and was “dumb” in the ways of school? Why did she share this with me, alongside contradictory stories of fond memories of her life in Grouard? I remember her telling me many stories where her life was good when she was younger, living in the North and full of adventures. I wonder what my granny was experiencing as she summed up the story of her life as a, “very ugly poor life.” At the time she gave me these notes, I was in university studying to become a teacher. She introduced me to her visitors as “Cindy, the teacher,” years before I graduated. I smile at this memory and am reminded of how proud she was at knowing I was going to school to become *somebody*; someone who did not in her eyes have an “ugly poor life.” As I now slide backwards, remembering my experiences where she expressed the importance of the school curriculum-making world and of becoming *somebody* first, I wonder about the stories of school I was living as I travelled between the two worlds. Was the school curriculum-making world seen as more important than our familial curriculum-making world? I wonder when my granny’s idea of *somebody* shifted from living and navigating the land, to becoming educated in the schooling system. My granny had a wealth of knowledge and yet I wonder now why she viewed her knowledge as having little or no worth. I also wonder about the shift of place in her stories to live by, when she believed the city to be home, yet always spoke of Grouard as our home place, a place situating and identifying our family as Cree-Métis people.

Story Bundle 2: A Bumping Place

In 1999, I asked my granny to share her experiences of traveling to her father’s Hudson Bay post at Fort St. John in 1930 when she was 16. During this time, I was an undergraduate student in the teacher education program and enrolled in a course titled, *The Métis*. Growing up I had listened to many of her stories of living in the North and I thought her experiences would provide me with suitable subject matter about the lives of Métis people. As such, I imagined a brilliant final paper for the course. I did not expect the tensions I would experience as I began to listen and record the stories she was sharing as I began to compare them to the school curriculum making I had been learning. At the time I did not know how to address these tensions, and, like the handwritten notes she gave me, the recorded conversation was never used and had been neatly stored in a safe place until I was called to narratively inquire into moments of tension between my familial and school curriculum-making worlds.

As I return, listen to, and inquire into our recorded conversation now, I recognize many tensions as my school curriculum-making world bumped up against my experiences in

my familial curriculum-making world, alongside my granny. I now pay attention to our words, her responses and wonders, our silences, the way I asked questions, and how I responded to the stories she told me. I notice surprise, shock, and disappointment in our voices; especially mine when the stories my granny shares do not follow the plotlines, events, and settings of the stories told in my school curriculum making, the curriculum making I valued as I was becoming *somebody*. In the transcription segment below, I ask my granny if she ever ate pemmican while they cooked bannock by campfires during her trip to the post. This was a lesson I learned in my school curriculum making about the diets of travelling Métis people with images of them, us,¹⁰ making, and eating meals of pemmican.

Granny: *Going across in the fall and ah we used to make 50 bannocks every night, we had to, to take them for the next day for our trip. We used to make a great big long fire and the boys used to help with those bannocks and my mother was busy making them, cooking them in the frying pan around, around the campfire, 50 a day or 50 at every evening we use to make, rain or shine never mind.*

Cindy: *Did you ever eat pemmican with that, did you ever eat pemmican?*

Granny: *Pumpkin?*

Cindy: *Pemmican? [wrote the word pemmican down on paper for her to read]*

Granny: *Pemmican, what's that?*

Cindy: *It's um, it's, it's like [trying to remember my learning in schools about pemmican] dried buffalo meat and they, they ground it and they add berries and lard?*

Granny: *We never see no buffalo, we never had no meat of buffalo.*

Cindy: *Oh?*

Granny: *They killed a bear over there on the way going and they skin it and everything and not very, not very [much], my dad, my mother wants one hind leg eh, one quarter. So they brought it for her and ah she sliced it but she smoked it a little bit there and she took it with her, she wanted to eat it.*

(Recorded Conversation, November 26, 1999)



Fig. 1: Great grandfather, William Alexander Gairdner (Centre) at Hudson Bay Post, date unknown.



Fig. 2: Photograph traveling to the Hudson Bay Post in Fort St. John, British Columbia. (L-R) Louise Gairdner, Fred Beaton, Nancy Gairdner (nee Gladu), unknown boy, Elizabeth Gairdner. Location unknown, date 1930.

Looking back now, as I listen to the recording and look at these photographs taken during her trip to the post, I recognize at the time I was not inquiring into her experiences, but merely listening and imposing the school curriculum making I was engaged in at university. I was learning about the diets of Métis people and of their dependence on buffalo meat. I imagine, before I began speaking with my granny, that surely she too lived this way and knew what pemmican was. I was surprised and began to stumble when my granny began to question the knowledge I was imposing into our conversation, knowledge I assumed she should have. As part of this curriculum making, I was also composing stories to live by as a Cree-Métis person in two different worlds: the school curriculum-making world and the familial curriculum-making world. Sliding forward, as I listen to the tape over and over again, I also pay attention to my story bundle, by inquiring into my stories to live by, as I was composing stories around my granny's kitchen table in 1999, I encounter another bumping place. Granny continued to share her experiences as she travelled to the Hudson Bay Post, while I continued to impose my school curriculum making of Métis people into her stories of experience.

Granny: *And ah, and we all got the same saddle horse all the time. And then when it comes to uh day in, and day in, every day, every day we travelled for two weeks and now you can get there in an hour's time. So then we uh had to, we had to stop by the river, now we had to camp there, right close where the bush is eh?*

Cindy: *Do you know which river?*

Granny: *Well the Peace, one of them is Peace River and the other one is Blueberry River and the other one I don't remember what was the name of it but we crossed three of them. We crossed three, three rivers. And we had to camp there and we'd get ready to cross, put everything right so that it won't get wet you know from...*

Cindy: *[Interrupting] How did you do that? Do you remember?*

Granny: *Well they, they have, they have ah, uh*

Cindy: *[Interrupting] 'Cause you had carts right, did you have carts, horses pulling these carts?*

Granny: *No.*

Cindy: *No? [Questioning voice]*

Granny: *They have ah, they have a way of fixing stuff so it won't get wet*

Cindy: *Uh huh.*

Granny: *'Cause you'd starve eh?*

Cindy: *Yeah.*

Granny: *And then they put higher, they put it higher and then uh, then two rivers we didn't have to make a scow. Gee why didn't I write all this when I was there. I could write already then even if I didn't go to school huh.*

Cindy: *Uh huh.*

Granny: *So ah I stayed there by the river um over night I think so they can, they can make a scow. We stayed there two days there.*

Cindy: *Draw me a scow, what's that look like?*

Granny: *Scow?*

Cindy: *Oh no, what does it look like? Yeah, what does it look like though Granny?*

Granny: *Well it's a, it's just like a big, did you ever see a, uh, oh, did you ever see a raft?*

Cindy: *Yeah, yeah.*

Granny: *Well like that.*

(Recorded Conversation, Field Texts, November 26, 1999)



Fig. 3: Mary Pruden riding her horse, Boldy, to the Hudson Bay post in Fort St. John, British Columbia. Location Fort Nelson, British Columbia, 16 years old, date: 1930.



Fig. 4: Photograph titled "Fording the North." Date: 1908.

As I reflect back on this conversation and look at these photographs, I wonder how was I making sense of my school curriculum-making world alongside very different stories of my familial curriculum-making world. What was I learning by recording and listening to my granny's experiences? Was I even really listening? Did I imagine my granny's experiences of knowing as unimportant and not "authentic" Métis experiences, as I tried to categorize her lived experiences into the knowledge I had learned in the school curriculum-making world? I recall being disappointed because she did not do the things I learned about Métis people from my school curriculum making. Looking back I wonder how was I supposed to make sense of her stories of experience when they did not follow my learning in schools? Feeling disappointed, I shelved our recorded conversation because it did not fit the story I was learning in textbooks about Métis people. As I did so, I imagine I disregarded my granny's experiences as being "not good enough" while I continued to follow and privilege the stories I had come to know in schools.

As I attend to the bumping places I experienced between my two curriculum-making worlds, tensions resonated throughout the recorded conversation. I pause now and wonder, was I being taught a homogenous narrative of Métis identity in my school curriculum-making world? Did I see the school curriculum as being the most important, even though my granny was trying to tell me otherwise through her telling and retelling of many stories of experiences she loved to tell? As I pay more attention to our interaction and the stories we both were telling, I notice I interrupted granny's stories of her experience and imposed my stories of Métis identity with pemmican, buffalo meat, and the use of carts pulled by horses, stories learned in the school curriculum-making worlds. My granny never spoke of the symbols I was learning in my school curriculum making, which narrowly identified Métis lifestyle and culture. As I listen now, I recognize my naivety. I sense the frustration in both our voices as I listen to the recording over and over. She seems annoyed with my questions as her answers become shorter and shorter. I sense my disappointment when her responses do not validate the knowledge I was composing in my school curriculum-making world. I also recognize now how my knowledge from the school curriculum-making world shaped the conversation, as I pay attention to how I tried to guide the conversation to fit a safer story; a story I thought to be true, valued, and most recognizable in schools. I now wonder what she thought about my questions as I was becoming *educated* in a university setting, an opportunity she never had. How did she make sense of my interruptions against her stories? When I began to question her stories to live by, did she see her stories as less than, and my stories of school as more important, just as I did? I wonder what she thought about my learning of Métis people in schools, about *her*, about *us* when it was so different from her experiences and the stories she was trying to share? I wonder now about the costs of living and travelling within and between multiple curriculum-making worlds, as I became *somebody*. I began to privilege the school curriculum over my familial curriculum making, when I put aside her stories of experience, especially in 1999 when I did not value the stories she was sharing with me; instead silencing them as I continued to follow the grand narratives learned in the school curriculum-making world.

Looking Forward: Why Familial Curriculum Making

Looking forward, Huber and colleagues (2011) engage in imagined conversations with curriculum theorists, other teacher educators, and families. They imagine these three groups will find value as we "broaden the boundaries of where, and under whose direction, curriculum is made" (p. 143) more than the narrow and limiting conceptualization with which it is currently associated. I imagine that practicing teachers and administrators will also find this reconceptualization of curriculum making valuable in their work alongside diverse children, families, and community members. Indeed,

I imagine that children will appreciate the acknowledgement of their familial curriculum making, and of their travel between and across two curriculum-making worlds.

I wonder about the possibilities when children have opportunities to share their familial curriculum-making worlds, which are often silenced in classrooms. How may children's lives be shaped differently if those working in schools attended to the stories being lived in families and communities? I now pay attention to the unfolding of lives inside classrooms, alongside others, and wonder how I may attend to the diverse, complex stories of experiences that are so very alive in children's familial curriculum-making worlds. As I further explore this reconceptualization of familial curriculum making within my research, it is my hope that I may add to future scholarship in its development and support the shift on school landscapes. Much like Huber et al. (2011) I wonder if the privileging of classroom and school curriculum making could shift to a more equitable regard for the curriculum making being lived out on familial and community landscapes? If we continue to privilege the school curriculum-making world without recognizing the multiple diverse familial curriculum-making worlds children live in daily, I cannot help but wonder about the costs to self and others. As Silko (1997) reminds me, "you don't have anything if you don't have the stories" (p. 2).

Notes

1. Connelly and Clandinin (1988) define *personal practical knowledge* as being in each "teacher's past experience, in the teacher's present mind and body, and in the future plans actions. Personal practical knowledge is found in the teacher's practice. It is, for any teacher, a particular way of reconstructing the past and the intentions of the future to deal with the exigencies of present situation" (p. 25).
2. I identified my granny using the terms *Grandma* and *Grandmother* in early school writing pieces. The words grandma and grandmother were rarely used at home, unless we were speaking about someone else's relation. All the grandchildren referred to her as *granny*, yet this is not present in my earlier writings. I wonder now, did I use these words because they were more acceptable in my school curriculum-making world?
3. Connelly and Clandinin developed the term "stories to live by" as a narrative conception of identity making, shaped by the narrative telling and retelling of secret and cover stories in various contexts. Secret and cover stories are lived out on personal and professional landscapes. Secret lived stories are stories told to others in safe and secret places. Cover stories shield secret stories, in order to protect the secret stories we live. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999).

4. Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) narrative inquiry research framework consists of the simultaneous exploration of temporality (past, present, future), sociality (personal and social), and place while moving in four directions, allowing inquirers to travel – inward, outward, backward and forward, always situated in place.
5. Secret and cover stories are lived out on personal and professional landscapes. Secret lived stories are stories told to others in safe and secret places. Cover stories allow us to cover over secret stories, in order to protect the secret stories we live. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999).
6. Huber et al. (2011) draw upon Lugones (1987) understanding that a “‘world’ need not be a construction of a whole society. It may be a construction of a tiny portion of a particular society. It may be inhabited by just a few people. Some ‘worlds’ are bigger than other” (p. 10). Lugones also calls me to pay attention to the concept of ‘world’ – travelling where “those of us who are ‘world’ – travellers have the distinct experience of being different in different ‘worlds’ and of having the capacity to remember other ‘worlds’ and ourselves in them” (p. 11). It is my hope by inquiring into my familial curriculum-making world, I will be able to travel into my granny’s world with “loving perception,” the ability to “understand what it is like to be [her] and what it is like to be ourselves in [her] eyes” (p. 17).
7. I borrow the term “story bundle” from author Kim Anderson. She does not directly define story bundle, therefore, this is my interpretation. Metaphorically, the story bundle represents the stories each person carries. The story bundles I will be referring to throughout the text are pieces of my story, lived and told in relation with others and stories yet to be created.
8. My mother and I experienced many transitions as she completed her Bachelor of Arts degree, first at the University of Calgary, then at the University of Alberta. As I moved from place to place, from school to school, I came to view my granny’s home as a place of stability. During a year of many transitions, I lived with my granny for a short period. I recall from early written school artifacts and from my memories, I had considered her home to be my home place.
9. St. Bernard’s Indian Residential School operated from 1894 to 1961. Information retrieved from http://www.caedm.ca/Portals/0/documents/social_justice/2014-02_21_IndianResidentialSchoolsinAlberta_WEB.pdf
10. The use of the word “us” refers to identifying my family and myself as Cree-Métis.

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